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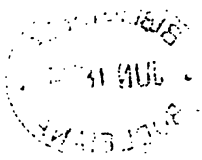

THE MASTER OF RED LEAF:

A Tale.

BY

ELIZABETH AVERY MERIWETHER.

"For my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and to common ears will sound like a fable.

"The world I regard is myself, it is a microcosm of my own soul, that I cast my eye on."—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

MASTER OF RED LEAF.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO PROUD WOMEN TAKING TEA WITH THEIR MASTERS.

THE scene that ensued was singular. As the insignificant moth is attracted by a bright flame, and drawn into its radius, so was our little captain fascinated by the high beauty, the marvellous grace, of Gertrude Gordon. One would have thought its rare purity would have lifted it above the admiration of so poor and commonplace a nature as his. It did not.

Every word, every glance, was for her. In the Captain's estimation Miss Clara Devaseur was only an adjunct of her cousin. Not so the

young lieutenant. Though holding himself so severely repressed, one might read in the stolen and sad glances of his honest eyes an admiration so ardent, so intense, it needed but a breath, a look, a smile of sympathy to lighten it into love.

I, the poor, plain teacher, was lost sight of.

With a ludicrous effort at elegance of manner, Captain Pym laid himself out to please, to enchant the object of his attention. As well might a buzzing fly hope to enchant an Arab courser.

Utterly unconscious of the contemptible part he was playing, he persisted in addressing his inane compliments, first to one, then the other of the cousins, always showing a preference for Miss Gordon.

The ladies listened in silence, or, if directly questioned, answered as laconically as language permitted. Not in the least did this chagrin the Captain or diminish his perfect satisfaction at the aspect of affairs.

Taking tea was little else than an empty ceremony with these ladies. They ate nothing, though quietly permitting the attentive gallant to put on their plates any dainty he saw proper to recommend.

His sprightly remark, intended as wit, "that young ladies subsisted either on moonbeams or love," only elicited from them a slight bow of grave assent—no smiling denial, such as he probably looked for. Nothing abashed him; nothing daunted his self-confidence. Throughout he was in the highest spirits, doing full justice to the excellent cuisine of Red Leaf.

When he was quite through eating, the ladies rose from the table. The Captain sprang up—he always moved as if on springs—and eagerly expressed the hope of having the pleasure of seeing the ladies in the drawing-room: he was excessively fond of music. "Would they not enliven the evening?"

Miss Clara glanced doubtfully at her cousin, as if looking to her to direct their course.

Miss Gordon seemed to reflect a moment, then in a tone so soft, yet so silvery clear, none present could fail to hear,

"Miss Stanhope," she asked, is not this sufficient?"

Confused and astonished, I stammered something of not comprehending.

"Surely," she replied in the same flute-like tones, "Miss Stanhope cannot have forgotten we were induced to leave the privacy of our chambers in the hope of preserving the house from plunder and fire. Is anything more required for that purpose?"

I felt my face flame. I imagined this refined scorn must wound our captain, who, whatever might be his personal imperfections, was an officer in a great army, and as such entitled to respect.

Lieutenant Reese's face went white as marble under the insult. He almost staggered, so keenly he felt the polished thrust. His lips parted, as if about to speak. A second thought, and he

mastered the impulse. He made a slight bow, then stood stone still, with a proud yet wounded look.

Captain Pym was impervious. Eagerly seizing the occasion, he broke forth in profuse professions of devotion to the sex in general, and to the representatives of the sex before him in particular.

"Plunder!" he cried. "The Union army has not come to plunder but to protect. General Butler, fearing the cotton on these unprotected plantations might fall into rebel clutches, had sent him to secure it."

"With my life," he continued, laying his hand upon his heart, "I will protect all loyal ladies, and I well know such ladies as I *now* see (with a springy little bow) can never be *dis*loyal to the best government on earth."

Miss Gordon gravely bent her head as if in assent.

Much more to the same effect the voluble captain chattered, to all of which the cousins

made no reply, and no sort of feeling flitted over their composed faces. When he seemed entirely to have exhausted his powers of speech, and had spent his stock of gallantries, Miss Gordon, as if in dismissal, or acknowledgment of that part of the business, slightly bowed to him her graceful head, then turned to me.

"Do you think, Miss Stanhope," she gently asked, "we might now be permitted to retire?"

Taken less by surprise than when she put her first question to me, I was less confused in my reply. I told her I did not doubt but that the Captain would resign the pleasure of their society in favour of their aunt, who was too ill to leave her chamber.

Captain Pym hastened to consent. "Certainly—certainly! If their aunt needed them —certainly!"

In the midst of the Captain's "certainlies," emphasised by springy little bobs and snaps of his dapper body, slightly bending their heads in adieu, the ladies of Red Leaf left the supper-room.

From one or the other, or both of these officers, I expected some show of indignation at the peculiar, the polished, the unassailable phase of pride just exhibited by these Southern ladies. I was mistaken. Captain Pym broke out into rhapsodies of admiration.

"Splendid creatures! Finest women in America! Incomparable!"

Then, though *in*comparable, he fell to comparing them with the women of the North and the men of the South. "Southern women," he declared, "were far more lovely than Northern. And as to Southern men, it was wonderful what poor creatures they were. No neatness, no style, careless, shaggy. He really doubted if they knew the use of combs and razors. Why, these rebel fellows let their beards grow rough, as if there weren't a razor in the world—shaggy as a lion's. He had never seen one who took the least pains with the parting in his hair. He liked to see a straight line in the back and front part of the head. But rebel women;—why, even these

country ladies would do to show in Boston or Broadway."

Surveying himself in the mirror, he brushed away the invisible dust on his blue coat, smoothed his hair, adjusted his moustache, set his military cap daintily on his head, and then went out humming an air.

During all this time I had watched Lieutenant Reese closely. A revolution seemed to be going on in his breast, a tumult in his soul.

I had observed that Miss Clara Devaseur, as she rose from the table, had let fall her handkerchief, a small bit of cambric and lace. The Lieutenant stooped to pick it up, but before restoring it he touched it to his lips. It was the act of an instant. When he gave it into her hand his eyes were on her face, but hers were bent down; yet I fancied the faint flush on her cheeks showed she was conscious of the homage his heart was laying at her feet.

The presence of his superior officer had served to restrain him. His position was indeed un-

fortunate. Intensely despising the *man*, compelled to respect the *office*, how could he reconcile the two?

It is painful to see a strong man weep. When a weak man weeps, we feel for him something like contempt. When tears are wrung from the fierce volcanic passions of a strong man's soul, they burn like lava—they afford no relief, as do the gentle drops that fall from woman's eyes.

Young Reese covered his face with his two hands, and sobs and tears burst out from his surcharged soul.

He was only twenty-two; his was a high and heroic heart. With a lofty patriotism he had rushed to defend the Union he adored. He had honestly believed that only a few false and selfish politicians in the South favoured Secession. He had hoped to restore the Union, to bring back peace and harmony between the severed sections. When he found restoring the Union meant the utter subjugation of a proud people long accus-

tomed to the usages of freedom, meant setting an inferior and ignorant race over a superior, his generous nature shrank back appalled.

After a few moments he mastered his emotion —mastered it enough to pour it out in words as he paced the floor up and down.

"Oh this is dreadful! dreadful!" he cried. "This is not what our President meant when he called for brave hearts and strong hands to restore the Union. *Restore?*—we are killing it more effectually than rebel bullets can kill. This war on women! Words are too weak to convey the contempt all manly hearts must feel for an army — a General — whose spite is spent on women, whose time is taken up in plunder! Better, a thousand times better, we had let this wretched South go in peace! Better——"

Suddenly he stopped and stood still in the middle of the floor. A swift change swept over his handsome face. Captain Pym was in the doorway, and had heard every disloyal word. His eyes were fixed on the young officer with a

mean, triumphant expression. They seemed to say, "Ah! ha! I've caught you at last!"

I had long suspected the existence of a strong but suppressed and partly concealed antagonism between these men—an antagonism inevitable from the nature of their beings, as well as the false nature of their positions—the superior subjected to the inferior.

I looked from the one to the other, as they stood in that moment of revealment, face to face, foes—open and undisguised foes.

In Captain Pym's face was the triumph of a mean and malicious satisfaction at the indiscretion of his Lieutenant.

As the latter took in the full sense of his Captain's countenance, a scorn, a high daring of anything fate might work for him seemed to take the place of his former grief. It was as if he had bid good-bye to prudence, and was ready for the worst. He stood facing the Captain and looking into his eyes with a menacing and dangerous ire. The Captain winced under their

unflinching gaze. Recalling to mind the vast advantage of his position as superior in command, as high favourite in the esteem of General Butler, the Captain gave way to a free expression of his feelings and resentment.

"*He* wasn't a man to brook insubordination in an officer under him, *he* wasn't to be deceived!—a Rebel in blue was as bad as a Rebel in grey. He had no use—the Union Army had no use—for Secesh sympathisers. For his part he preferred a Southern Secesh to doughfaced Democrats—a Northern Copperhead was more mischievous than a Southern traitor."

All this and more the Captain sputtered out as he stepped around with jerky gesticulations, getting nearer and nearer the object of his anger, who stood as a statue of stone, neither retreating nor advancing one hair's breadth, while in his eyes a dark and dangerous power seemed to be gathering, whose gleam was like cold steel. Had that look been fixed on me, it would have pierced like a poniard.

The Captain was too full of his own fume and sputter to know the danger he was inviting, or to realise how offensive and irritating was his language.

Could that proud and fiery young man continue to bear all this without a word? As the question rose in my mind, came the solution—Captain Pym lay at full length on the floor, stretched there by one blow from his inferior officer. Pym had come within striking distance, the temptation was strong, and he yielded to it.

After the blow, the Lieutenant coolly walked to the window, and, with his fingers, drummed on a pane of glass. His air of indifference was a masterpiece of acting, or a masterly self-control, rarely found in one so young and keenly tempered.

The rage of the Captain under less serious circumstances would have been ludicrous; as it was, as the object of his rage was so much in his power, I shuddered to think of the mischief it might work.

Jumping up as soon as he could, pale with revengeful rage, Pym ran to call a guard.

I sprang to the young officer's side.

"Is it not a death penalty," I asked, under my breath, "to strike your superior officer? If you are tried by a court-martial have *me* summoned. *I* can testify to your long forbearance, your great provocation."

He looked at me earnestly, sadly; his eyes were wet with tears.

"My dread of death," he said, "is gone, my love of life has departed, I am ready for any fate."

There was no time for argument, the guard came in, arrested, and carried him away.

He was strictly guarded during the day. I watched for an opportunity to speak to him, but none presented. I was convinced Captain Pym's resentment would pursue him to the extremity of the law.

There was neither magnanimity nor pity in that small and selfish heart.

About four o'clock a boat came to convey captured cotton to New Orleans. Captain Pym had told me he intended to send his insolent officer by the first boat to the city to be tried by a court-martial.

I was on the bank as the guard passed on with their prisoner. His white face had lost nothing of its sternness, but mingled with the sternness was the deepest sadness. Lifting his eyes from the ground, he saw me; a movement of his lids, as he put his finger in his vest pocket, said plainly he wanted to communicate with me. I walked on, watching him closely.

Captain Pym stood on the front portico. I could not see the expression of his countenance, but could imagine his satisfaction at the unhappy situation of the man he hated. The guard kept their eyes to the front. The Lieutenant turned his head, with another expressive look from his eyes, put his two hands behind him, clasping them together after the fashion of the first Napoleon. It was an attitude unusual with this

young man. He more often folded his arms over his breast. A glance from his eye seemed to direct me to walk behind. I slowly followed—a distance of fifty feet between us. The guards were at his side, consequently did not see what occurred in the rear.

The prisoner's clasped hands let drop to the ground a small white pellet. I loitered with an air of indifference. The guard and their prisoner tramped on. The latter flashed me an inquiring look. I nodded my head, with a glance at the spot where lay the pellet. He took off his hat and bowed to me. To me his salutation said, "I thank you;" to others it appeared a simple adieu.

When near where the pellet lay, I stood still and looked out upon the river. The little white thing was at my feet, but I dared not stoop to pick it up. Captain Pym was still on the portico, with a field-glass in his hand, watching the retreating form of his foe.

I stood there until the guard and the prisoner

were out of sight, and Captain Pym had left the portico. Then I stooped for the missive.

It was a leaf from a note-book, written on with a pencil. There was neither name, date, or direction; but I knew—I knew.

It said—

"Tell her *I would die for her or hers.* Tell her, *every wrong, every insult, done to her is a deeper wound to me.* Tell her, *I go to death without hope, but without regret. Since I have known her, since the faith of doing a high and noble duty has faded from me, like an illusive dream, and all the horrors of this cruel war are weighing on my soul, making a deep and bitter remorse, the beauty of life is gone. My last thoughts, and sweetest, will be of her. Let her not hate my memory. I—*"

It ended abruptly, as if he had been interrupted while writing it. What to do with this communication I could not at once determine. To speak to either of the Red Leaf ladies of the admiration, the passion, of one of their

scorned and hated foes, was more than I liked to do.

I put the paper in my pocket, and slowly returned to the house. The ladies were acquainted with the circumstances of the arrest of the young officer. I had related it to them from my standpoint, and Captain Pym had rehearsed it from his, for their edification during dinner. They had made no comments either on my or the Captain's story. I had fancied, from the faint colour that came and went on Miss Clara Devaseur's fair face, that a greater interest was felt than she would permit herself to show.

As I walked up the broad gravelled pathway to the hall door, I saw the heads of the two cousins at an open window above. Had they, too, watched the guard and the young prisoner as he went to disgrace and death?

A servant met me at the door, with a request that I would repair to Miss Gordon's room: the ladies would like to see me a moment.

I ran up stairs. The two cousins had left the

window, and were sitting side by side at a small table arranging flowers.

I knew these women had no heart for the gaiety of flowers. Life was become too sombre for vivid reds, and purples, and blues; only black could now harmonise with the mournful hue of their lives. I knew it was with a strong effort that Miss Gordon preserved the impassable serenity, the cold quiet front, she showed. A close observer might read in her eyes something of the sadness of her heart something of its torturing anxieties, although her high and unsubdued pride held them down, denying them either motion or utterance.

I could but marvel at her powers of self-control. She as carefully selected and arranged the flowers as if she had no more serious thought.

She asked me if I knew what would be done with Lieutenant Reese for his insubordinate conduct?—for having struck his commanding officer?

I answered that a court-martial would try the

case. My eyes were on Miss Clara Devaseur's down-cast face. That face was already sufficiently pale. I fancied it grew whiter as I spoke of the death a court-martial might decree.

Then I related the little fact of finding a paper I had seen fall from his hand as he walked on to the boat—"a strange paper—*I* could not understand it."

I laid the small paper before the eyes of the two cousins. On the table, amid the roses and violets, the magnolias and myrtles—on the table, beneath the two eyes which had been loadstars for him, I laid those lines which were the outbreathings of a high and passionate heart.

Together bent the lovely heads, and together, word by word, they silently read the confession of their foe.

Miss Clara Devaseur had not that strong power of self-control so eminent in her cousin. Though she might hate and scorn this young officer as the enemy of her country, as a man it was plain he had touched some of the finer chords

of her heart. In the deep and secret recess of her soul was an ideal image which young Reese resembled.

After slowly twice going over the impassioned lines, she spread her two hands over her face to conceal the feeling she could not conquer. The tears slid from her eyes, and fell from between her slender fingers. Miss Gordon circled her in her arms, and drew down the fair head to her bosom, and held it there, as a tender mother might hold a hurt child.

"Oh, my darling! my darling!" she said, in accents of ineffable pity, "it is not the first time in the sad history of humanity it has fallen to women's lot to suffer as we suffer. Only heaven is free from sorrow. Oh, my darling! my darling! would I could absorb yours from your young heart!"

Her cousin lifted her head and wiped the tears from her cheeks. An attempted smile on her trembling lips was more touching than full abandonment to grief.

"*You?*" she said, "*you* take *my* sorrows? Dear cousin, you shame me into a show of fortitude."

Without another word they continued arranging flowers.

Captain Pym remained a week longer at Red Leaf—for what purpose I could not see, as all the cotton in the neighbourhood had been carried off, and all the negroes of suitable age enlisted in the army.

The intercourse between the Captain and the cousins continued of precisely the same character on both sides. Notwithstanding the noisy and effervescing nature of his admiration, the high and peculiar pride of Miss Gordon had power to preserve her from personal contact. I began to wonder if Miss Gordon had no suspicion that she herself was the object of his feeble and fussy infatuation. Even had she been free, instead of legally united to the man of her choice, even had Pym's social position set him above her, or at her side, under any conceivable circumstances,

that he, trim, smug, small, soul and body, should aspire to mate with her was the very extreme of the incongruous.

After the Federal forces had left Red Leaf, the family more fully realised the spoliation the place had suffered. The negroes carried off, the cotton taken away, the silver and pictures purloined, the many articles of use or ornament, with which the eye had become familiar and fond, now gone for ever.

Miss Clara Devaseur went through the rooms which had been occupied by the officers, the hall and chambers frequented by the soldiers; and burst into tears at the sight of empty places. She wept over the vacant spaces where so long had hung the work of a master's hand; over the vacant spots where had stood statuettes of beauty, or marble busts of the great and good.

Miss Gordon, true to her rigid plan of self-control, gave no sign of grief or impatience; uttered no word of complaint. Followed by Philip, the chief negro of the place, and Mammy

Milly, the house-keeper—she too went over the house, pointing out to those grave and indignant servitors, *not* the empty places—these she passed by in silence—but the defacements that might be remedied, the dirt that might be removed, the litter that was offensive.

The marble mantels, once so purely white, were soiled by grease and stained by medicinal mixtures. The floors, laid in tesselated stone, not only were defiled by great quantities of tobacco juice, but were cracked and broken, as if centaurs, with iron shod feet, had walked upon them. The book-shelves were thinned, the most costly books had been carried away, and others lay around torn and injured. Musical instruments had fared badly; nothing had escaped unharmed. Yet not a word of comment did Miss Gordon utter; she simply pointed out to the servants the disorders that were but too apparent, and gave directions to mend and cleanse.

I would have given worlds to have witnessed in her signs of weakness or of anger. I listened

for the wail that did not come; I watched for the wrath her strong will yet held down out of sight.

Of the feeling that lived and burned in my heart since our return to Red Leaf I have said but little. In a sad history like this the story of suffering becomes monotonous, and the narrator naturally shrinks from touching the core of her keen and incurable wound. Since that day of our return to Red Leaf, since the cruel quietus then put upon the foolish hopes I had indulged, since that bitter moment when from the coarse cotton of the negro's dress, from the vulgar turban and beads of the slave, I had seen emerge the white and flawless woman whom I had hoped never to see again—into that deep and incurable wound had been poured a virulent poison which was fast corrupting my whole being.

Was it not a sign that this poison was permeating my whole system when I saw the downfall of the Devaseur house with such deep satisfaction? There may be those of my sex, whose unvexed love flowing smoothly to its ocean of

rest, there to mix and mingle in deep abysms of content, who will wonder how I, so devoted to the Master of Red Leaf, should have found any joy in the desolation of his estate, in the destruction of his property.

What know such favoured mortals of the strange straits in the human heart? *Their* bark has only sailed on smooth seas; neither storms nor adverse winds have sent them hither and thither in unknown waters, or wrecked them on treacherous rocks.

To the unexperienced reader the contending emotions of my heart may appear inconsistent. I relate what *was*, not what should have been. I only know, from any paradise I would willingly have descended to any perdition *with* the Master, if, in the perdition, the distance that divided us would have been less than than that which severed us in the paradise. I would have dared any danger which promised to set aside or lessen the invisible barriers *something* seemed to have built between us.

Though feeling a secret satisfaction at the scattering of his large possessions, I would have served him on bended knees; though welcoming and beckoning on the mean poverty that stared in and mocked at his hall door, I would have coined my blood to gold to give to him, and drained dry my life that he might drink and his thirst be slaked.

CHAPTER II.

LIEUTENANT REESE RETURNS TO RED LEAF.

A MARKED difference in the conduct of the negroes began to appear. Throughout the neighbourhood and adjoining parishes the blacks became unsettled, confused, and wandered from place to place. They were not in quest of freedom; for freedom they had. At the approach of Union soldiers the overseers of every plantation laid down the reins of government, and slaves did as they pleased.

Perhaps they roved around to test the length of the rope given them. Preacher Jim was never stationary—going from one plantation to another preaching on politics or religion, rejoicing that the day of jubilee had come, and that blacks were now "ekel to whites."

Some of the older negroes shook their heads in a dubious way while listening to Jim's rant about freedom, and muttered doubts whether "niggers was gwine to make good use o' dis yer free-dom thing."

One-eyed Sampson, though less active and energetic than Jim, was also a great stickler for the equality of the races. I could but think my teachings had sown the seeds of those free opinions.

It may seem strange to some minds that the slaves who lived near the persons of their white owners, whose daily life kept them ever about the house of their masters, though more refined and intelligent than the plantation negroes, were far less loyal to the Union cause. In many cases these body-servants, as they may be called, were animated by a perverse and irrational loyalty toward the men and women and children who held them in chains. I have heard such blacks talk treason as glibly as any white could talk it.

Doubtless this was owing to one of two causes,

or it may be, both causes operated to some extent. Either the house slaves were attached to the persons of their masters as, in monarchical countries, courtiers are the strongest adherents of kings, or the luxury and ease in which these house servants lived enervated their natures, and unfitted them for that high and heroic love of liberty, which leads men to dare and do, to stake family, and fortune, and life, on the effort to attain it.

Captain Pym had been gone about a week when a boat landed and put off a passenger. As it had cost the Captain a severe effort to tear himself away from Red Leaf, I confidently looked for his early return. It mattered little if, in point of fact, there was no more cotton in the neighbourhood, and no more negroes of the right age for soldiers, it would be an easy task to find an excuse for a second visit. I waited on the portico in full expectation of seeing the Captain coming up the lawn to the house. I was mistaken. Instead of the small Captain's neat trim

figure, clad in bright blue cloth, brass buttons, and gold braid, the tall form of his young Lieutenant, whom he had sent away in disgrace to be tried by a court-martial, came swiftly up the gravelled way.

He was alone, and in citizen dress, not a token about him to indicate a military avocation. I went forward and greeted him gladly. I had never thought to see him again, and showed the gladness I felt at finding he was alive, and well, and *free*. His countenance, his eyes, told that an incubus was lifted from his life. Hope looked eagerly out from the windows of his soul.

After asking about the health of the family, he commissioned me to seek Mrs. Devaseur, and beg of her the favour of a few minutes' conversation on a matter of importance to himself. The audience was given in the library. Full of curiosity as to the object of this visit, and the cause of the citizen's dress, I remained on the portico in the hope of seeing him as he came from the conference.

A full hour elapsed when the library bell rang. Rose went to answer it, and a moment after brought me a request from Mrs. Devaseur to attend her in the library. The two cousins had received the same command, and we all three entered at the same moment. Lieutenant Reese bowed and offered seats, showing no more politeness or attention to one than to the other. I knew this was his first greeting of these ladies since his return, yet he made no offer of his hand. I fancied I detected a deeper interest in his eyes as he glanced at the younger of the cousins, whose shy, half-frightened face grew pink and white by turns. The elder cousin maintained her usual composure.

Mrs. Devaseur was the first to speak.

"I have sent for you Miss Stanhope," she said, "and for you Gertrude and Clara, at the request of Lieutenant Reese, who wishes you to hear the explanation he has to make of his present position, and his past connection with the Union army."

"Miss Stanhope," began the young man, looking first at me, then at the cousins, "more than the other ladies of Red Leaf must have seen during my stay here how painful was my position; how almost unbearable; how utterly repugnant to my principles and feelings was the work I was set to do. When President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand men to crush the spirit of rebellion in the South, I was a student in college. Every newspaper I saw represented that the rebellion was confined to a few selfish demagogues and politicians in the South possessed with the evil passion for power; that the people—the great body of the people—were held down and overawed by these daring and unprincipled men. Acting on this idea, I left my studies and rushed to join the Union army. I confidently expected, as our army penetrated the Southern States, that the people would rise up and fight under our Union banner—would welcome us with warm hearts and open arms—would hail us as deliverers from tyranny, as

friends of freedom. Such were the feelings and hopes that filled my soul as I marched down to this fair land. As heaven is my witness, had I known how false were my conceptions of the condition of this country, how different from the reality; had I known your people were a unit in their desire for a separation from the North; had I known that, instead of distrusting your political and military leaders, you honoured and loved them; had I known that "restoring the Union" meant the desolation of the land, meant the destruction of homes, the laying waste of fields—meant pillage and fire—meant a warfare on women and children, never, never would I have come to help on this hellish work!

"After a few weeks' stay in New Orleans, after witnessing the many painful scenes enacted there, the rapacity of our officers for the spoils of war, their greed for gain, the suffering of a proud people reduced to abject submission under the most despotic military rule, I wrote a letter to President Lincoln briefly stating the facts as

I have to you, and asked him to accept my resignation. So long an interval elapsed after the sending of that letter, I had begun to think my request had been thrown aside as unworthy of an answer. Meanwhile, with Captain Pym, I was ordered to scout the coast of the river in search of cotton. I know it is military fashion to call the seizure of cotton "capture;" but I never seized a bale of cotton belonging to private persons that I did not feel like a robber. I expressed this feeling to my superior officers. Captain Pym construed it into sympathy with Secessionists. General Butler called it by a milder name—chicken-heartedness.

"Miss Stanhope will remember the circumstances that led to my arrest and sudden exit from Red Leaf, guarded as a criminal. I then had no hope of escaping the machinations of my enemies. I expected a death-sentence from a court-martial, and probably such would have been my fate but for the fact, that President Lincoln had written more than a month previous

his acceptance of my resignation, which letter was sent to General Butler, and from some oversight or accident, its delivery had been delayed. When it was made plain to Captain Pym that, at the time I struck him, he had no military authority over me, his chagrin was so great, he attempted to push his charge of 'disloyal words' and 'secession sympathy.' General Butler would not entertain it, and I was free once more.

"The first use I made of that freedom was to change my clothes, to lay off the insignia of war, to put on the every-day garments of peace, and present myself before you to ask of you pardon for the wrongs I have done you, for the forced intrusion on your home, for the spoliation you have suffered, for the indignities you have endured."

He paused and looked down, as if awaiting the pardon he craved. There was perfect silence for a moment. I began to wonder if these proud women could coldly hear that appeal and make no response. Mrs. Devaseur was sitting near

where he stood. When she found he had no more to say, she stretched out her hand and clasped his in it. She spoke no word; but the act was enough. The young officer looked gratefully down, and timidly bent his lips to the hand he held.

Miss Gordon and her cousin were on the sofa across the room. The former rose, and, with that slow grace of movement I never saw equalled by any other woman, went up to the young officer, and, offering her hand, led him back to where sat Miss Clara Devaseur with down-cast eyes.

"My dear cousin," she said, "permit me to present to your acquaintance, as worthy of your friendship, a gentleman of the truest type. In this sad, disappointing world, we rarely find hearts as true, courage as high, and sense of justice as broad as Lieutenant Reese is blessed with. Were all men in America as honest and as clear in their conception of right, war would cease and tyranny be a thing of the past."

After this complimentary speech, Miss Gordon

went to her aunt, leaving the young man standing by the sofa looking down on the fair head and fair face of the woman he loved.

"Your aunt and your cousin," he said in a low tone, "have spoken to me words of gracious kindness—more than I merit. Will not *you* fill full the measure of my content by *one* kind glance, *one* to tell me I am no longer the hated foe, no longer a robber in your house, but one who would die to defend it."

The white lids quivered, and the faint flush spread over her face, and she lifted the lids slowly, and the blue and the dark eyes met and mingled their souls together.

Miss Gordon returned to his side.

"My aunt commissions me," she said, "to offer you a cordial welcome to Red Leaf. She hopes you may find it pleasant to remain with us for some days."

The young man stood a few moments in profound silence. He seemed to be reflecting on the course he should pursue. At length he spoke.

"While grateful to Mrs. Devaseur for the kindness she shows me, I must frankly state, that—that my stay depends on—*conditions.* During the two weeks I lived in this house as a—robber, the pain and humiliation I naturally felt at the ignoble part circumstances forced me to play were intensified by the fact that—that—(he hesitated with a not unbecoming embarassment, and then resumed in a low trembling tone) —the fact that *she,* whom I soon learned to look on as the one woman in the world, *she,* who from the first moment I saw her became to me the star of my life, *she* who stole upon my heart, and lives within it, and whom I have not power to banish thence, when I felt that she must view me with abhorrent eyes"—for an instant his emotion impeded his voice. After a pause, he went on—"I may as well be frank. If my presence is still unpleasant to *Miss* Devaseur, if the love she has inspired is scorned, if she hates me as a foe, or despises me as a thief, I cannot stay."

There was a dead stillness for a time. A great struggle seemed to be going on in Miss Clara Devaseur's breast. Her lover's eyes were fixed on her changing face.

A smile was on the elder cousin's lips. I thought a pleased smile. She went to her cousin and sat by her side.

"My darling," she said, "shall we send him away? Shall we banish this bold man who so bravely asks for the priceless love of our dearest and best?"

As she spoke, the younger cousin hid her face in the elder's breast, and was held there an instant; the young man looking down waiting the word to go or stay. At length Miss Gordon rose.

"Mr. Reese," she said, "I think you may stay; I think I know my cousin's heart, though she may hardly know it herself. When we sat at the window and saw you taken away under guard, I read, in her white face and tearful eyes, a story her tongue could not venture to confess."

She bowed and withdrew. Mrs. Devaseur had already gone, overcome by the excitement of the interview. I also felt no little astonishment at the unlooked for condescension from such proud women. Was not this young man one of the "mean Yankees" Southerners were forever talking of?

How irrational and inconsistent appeared to me this young man's opinions and conduct—how little he comprehended the true object of the war, which was *not* to restore the Union, but to crush slavery. What sacred thing was *Union* that millions of money should be spent, and rivers of blood shed to restore it? What did UNION signify? In the beginning of our Republic, Union meant a oneness of sentiment and interest, not a yoke, whether iron or silken —meant a marriage of the atomic parts of States and people, not a tying together with ligatures, or pinning together with bayonets. When the North and the South quarrelled, and the latter wanted a separation, did any sane man suppose

that shot and shell, fire and devastation, and the slaughter of many thousands, and the desolation of homes, and impoverishment of the whole people, would restore the old Union of love and harmony—the old ONENESS? The thing was impossible. It is not in human nature to be whipped into love. And those politicians who insist that the war on the South was to restore the Union show their own ignorance of human nature. Instead of restoring the Union the war killed it as dead as the old Roman Empire is dead. True, the name yet exists, but the nature is changed. The Union is now a strong centralised Government, and the President sits in the White House almost as autocratic as the Czar of Russia. It is only the savage who believes he can force his wife to love him. Should she attempt to escape, he drags her back by the hair, he throws her down and beats her, he tramples her under his heavy feet, he tells her "she *must* live with him and love him, for he is the best husband on earth," and when she lies

bleeding and helpless, and gasping at his feet, lo! he announces to the world that their Union is restored, they will clasp hands and hearts and love as of yore! And the wife may not speak to deny his assertion, or she may speak, and say—"Yes, our love is great; you are the best husband in the world; I would not leave you if I could"—and savages might believe in the love, because there is a show of it, but those who have any knowledge of human nature must know the love is impossible. Coercion cannot force affection. It is an eternal law of nature that when any creature, or thing, has done the work for which it was called into existence, it begins to die, its vitality decays, it must die. The Union of the American States was founded on the fear of aggression from the monarchical countries of Europe. Fear called the Union into existence. There is no longer fear of European powers; there is no danger from that quarter. The Union has done the work it was expected to do, viz., commanded the respect of foreign countries,

and shown itself able to sustain Republican principles. The danger now menacing those principles comes not from without, but lies in her own breast. The strong centralised power that rose up and conquered the South, that overturned States' rights, is, in fact and reality, of the same nature as the monarchical powers of Europe; and the intense loyalty felt for the UNION is of the same nature as the loyalty of the old world's people for their monarchs. The *Union* became, in the opinion of the people, a monarch with divine right to govern, just as the English monarch has a divine right to rule. The Union monarch is impersonal, hence its firmer hold on the minds of the people. The Union became as sacred as a religion. Impersonal creatures, myths of the mind, evoke a wilder and deeper fanaticism than personal rulers. The Union was a myth, yet many died for it. It seems to me that any but a politician must see that the severance of the Union into several parts is a foredoomed thing. The power

vested in the central government is too great—it corrupts those who hold it. The country is too vast in extent, and too diversified in climate and interest, to hold a homogeneous people. A government to be enthroned in the hearts of the people must be a *home* government. It is evident the Washington Government is too distant to be *felt* as home government. More or less the people of California will feel it as a *foreign* power, so must inevitably feel the people of Louisiana or any *old* distant State. So soon as distant States are full grown they will come to want a home government; they will come to think they can legislate for themselves, and by themselves, much better than by the help of States thousands of miles away, in different climate and latitude, and with widely differing habits of life. In the face of these facts, what man will dare justify the gigantic four years' war on the South as a measure to restore the Union? Was the continuance of the Union a few years more or less worth the million

lives lost in the war, the billions of treasure spent, the multitude of broken hearts and desolated homes, and orphaned children?

But the great principle of human freedom is priceless. The moral sentiment of the civilization of this century is against human slavery. The South held in one hand human slavery, in the other States' rights. States' rights shared the odium of its near companion. Nevertheless, sooner or later the American people will come to the knowledge that States' rights is less dangerous to the liberties of the people than centralised power, and less corrupting to the people that practice it. Its association with slavery was the accident, not the purpose of its life.

Is it objected by any zealous Unionist, that if prolonging the existence of the Union were not worth the blood and treasure spent, still less was the freedom of the blacks worth so fearful a price?

Is any price too large to pay for a lesson in justice? The people of the South have paid

dearly for *their* lesson; but it is worth it to them. Slavery is the concretion of injustice. Its destruction was like removing ligatures from the people's mind. The mentality of the South will now expand; it will take broader and grander views of the destiny of life.

Freedom is the promised-land toward which human hopes turn and human hearts yearn. Many tribes and peoples yet wander in wildernesses, and only a few prophetic eyes look forth from the Pisgas of thought, and catch glimpses of that far-off land, that fair and splendid land, which ultimately will be the inheritance of all the children of earth.

In the sad history of humanity, as it struggled up from the brute to the savage, from the savage to the barbarian, from the barbarian to the dawn of civilisation, from the dawn to the fair morning that is now upon us, and which gives promise of a glorious day—in that dark and bloody history the reflecting mind finds ample proof that in humanity's march to a higher and more elevated

status the lives of the individuals who perish by the way-side, who fall in that onward struggle, are as nothing, count for nothing. The progress of the race is all—the gain to humanity is all.

The destruction of slavery in the northern part of the American continent is a great gain to humanity, is another step toward the promised land of freedom.

CHAPTER III.

LACHESIS.

THE loves of the two young souls seemed to flow as smoothly as any rythmic stream. They lived a two-fold life. When in company with others the hard realities encompassed them, the cruel war darkened their skies, they heard the savage roar of its fierce battles. When they two, the young, the loving, the beautiful, were alone together, the roar of the battles died out in the distance, the sound of the cannons and the beat of the drums did not disturb the sweetness of the dream that stole upon their young hearts. The cruel war went out of sight, and the sky was blue, the air soft, the sunshine warm, and the face of the high heavens full of a tender glory. For them old earth became an enchanted land—

a paradise lovelier than the Eden our first parents lost. *This* is the world God and love have given to man. So near akin to heaven—Alas! man's selfishness more often makes it hell.

Knowing the ill-feeling that existed between Captain Pym and his lieutenant, it was with some anxiety I learned that the Captain had returned to Red Leaf with his company of soldiers.

Mrs. Devaseur requested me to see the Captain and explain to him the position Mr. Reese held as the accepted suitor for Miss Devasuer's hand.

"Ah!" said the Captain with a frown, "It's well the d—d Copperhead didn't see fit to fancy *my* girl; he'd better not interfere with *my* plans, I can tell you!"

What did he mean? Had the Captain forgotten that Miss Gordon was in reality a married woman? That her husband was a traitor did not change the fact.

"Perhaps, Captain," I said, "you do not remember that the lady I am in the habit of calling

Miss Gordon is in reality *Mrs.* Devaseur? She was united to her cousin, Mr. Devaseur, five minutes before he left Red Leaf to join the rebel army."

"No," he replied, "I have not forgotten it. You told me when I was here before. You don't begin to know Captain Pym if you think a thing like that is going to balk him. Why, it won't take ten minutes for Major Bell to knock that marriage into fits.* The fact that her husband is a rebel sneak is ground enough for divorce, and, I tell you, Bell's quick on the divorce trigger. The girl's got money in New Orleans—lots of it, and real estate; I haven't a doubt that her old aunt bullied her into marrying just to keep the money in the family."

"You think, then," I said, to lead him on, —"you think, Captain, she cares nothing for her husband?"

"How can she care for a rebel sneak, who married her one minute and abandoned her the

* See note on page 89, vol. ii.

next? You don't know the sex like *I* know 'em. *I've* studied 'em, I tell you. Women don't like such fellows. Women like fellows that stand their ground. D—n it! do you think *I'd* run from my wife the minute after I'd married her? Just let me get her down to the city,—she'll forget him in a week."

I looked at the man in amazement. How could he be so stultified as to suppose a grand creature like Miss Gordon would stoop to him?—to his companionship?—would prefer *him* to the high and perfect one she had wedded?

The Captain informed me that he meant to set up a tent on the lawn and use it as head-quarters, but that he would take his meals with the Red Leaf ladies for the pleasure of their society.

He had come, he said, to search for rebel cotton. A reliable contraband had given him to understand there were large quantities of cotton hidden in the woods. Cotton was now equal to

gold; he knew officers growing rich by seizing rebel cotton.

He bade me inform the ladies that he would have the honour of dining with them.

Of course this intimation had all the force of a command. Rebel women found themselves bound to obey a master who held over them fire and flames as means of coercion.

Of course, in obedience to their master, the ladies of Red Leaf ordered the table to be laid for five. The Captain was in the best of humours and in the newest of uniforms, with the brightest of braid and buttons. In his shirt front was a diamond pin; on the middle finger of his right hand glittered another diamond. The Captain told me in confidence he had "captured these diamonds from a d—d secesh. woman."

His hair was scented with musk and roses, and smoothed to a nicety; his smug face animated with eager expectation. His impatient eyes were fixed on the door until the cousins, as before, came in together, and, with a grave and

serious air, bowed to the Captain as though he had been absent only an hour. With gushing gladness he sprang to meet them. He hoped they were quite well; he hoped no imprudent reb's had been around to annoy and frighten them; he hoped they had passed a pleasant time, etc., etc.

To all of which the same polite bend of the graceful heads, the same sweet but impassable serenity of face was presented. Mr. Reese came in while the exuberant Captain was in the midst of his greetings. Bows of the most cold and formal sort were interchanged between the gentlemen, and we all sat down to dinner.

Captain Pym kept up an unrestrained chatter. He seemed to feel himself master of the situation, and was full of self-confidence.

Nor did he seem to see anything objectionable in the manner of these ladies. On the contrary, he appeared as delighted with them as with himself. He took no notice whatever of the Lieutenant, who ate his dinner in grave silence,

save a few words in a low tone addressed to the lady of his love, who sat by his side.

Captain Pym was in and out of the house as often as it suited him to come and go: but the tent on the lawn was the office in which he received his soldiers, and the negroes who came for rations or enlistment.

His attentions to Miss Gordon grew more open, more marked. Her manner of meeting them was precisely what it had been during their first interview. The same cold, yet gentle serenity.

Could she know what I so plainly perceived, viz., that he thought he was making love to her? Could she know and suppress even a shadow of annoyance, even a passing show of disgust? I well knew that to her he must be utterly repugnant. That she would value the admiration of a puppy puling in a kennel as much as this puppy in the parlour, I felt certain. But whether she would consider the puppy in the parlour any more than the one in the kennel worth a resentful feeling, I could not tell. She was so unlike other

women, I could but guess at her feelings. Perhaps, after all, the anxiety for the fate of her country and her lover so absorbed and filled her, all other things were trifles not worth a moment's thought. In her sad abstraction, the sighs of the small Captain may have suggested indigestion rather than sentiment; and the eyes he made at her—if she saw them at all—she may have suspected were caused by some strabismic affection rather than any effort at homage to her charms.

The arguments of Lieutenant Reese won the ladies to his view. The marriage was set for an early day; and it was determined at last that it was best for the ladies to leave Red Leaf and take refuge in Kentucky until peace was restored.

Captain Pym heard of this arrangement with great dissatisfaction. He could not give up the designs he cherished in regard to Miss Gordon.

CHAPTER IV.

A DARK CONSPIRACY.

My window commanded a view of the tent on the lawn used as Captain Pym's head-quarters. I could not avoid observing the people that went in and out of the tent. For several days I had noticed Preacher Jim and One-eyed Sampson stealthily confabulating together, standing under trees, or sitting on settees in the shade. I say stealthily, because, although they stood or sat openly in sight of every passer-by, if approached by any third person, they moved away beyond hearing, and resumed their talk. Preacher Jim's rapid and grotesque gestures seemed to indicate that the subject was an exciting one. Always after one of these talks the two went into the tent to see Captain Pym.

A little curious as to what these negroes were after, I mentioned their names to Captain Pym in an endeavour to find out. His manner, his startled look, his reticence, raised rather than removed my curiosity. What scheme was on hand which these loyal men could not confide to me whose loyalty was above suspicion?

One morning a more than usually animated interview passed between the three. After they separated, I saw One-eyed Sampson start off with his fishing-rod. Catching cat- and buffalo-fish was his favourite pastime. Since freedom had been given him by the brave soldiers in blue, this giant black and the small negro Jim had declared their eternal divorce from cotton-fields. Ploughs and hoes they hated.

Preacher Jim earned a modest support by hunting the woods for squirrels by day and raccoons by night, and to this was added such small sums as were contributed by his congregations, fees for marriages, &c. One-eyed Sampson devoted himself to fishing. In my rambles down

the river side I had often seen him lying or sitting half asleep, his lines cast in the "lucky water," watching for the monster's bite. The cat-fish and buffalo-fish he sometimes caught were of immense size.

I put on my hat, and slowly followed this black fisherman.

The best of the lucky places was a mile or more beyond the Devaseur demesne. Although the Red Leaf lands comprised thousands of acres, the part that fronted the river-bank was not of any great length: the land ran back to the east. A public highway lay along the river's bank. The day was hot and sultry. Wearied with the long walk, I stopped to rest under a tree a short distance from the road.

While there a scene occurred, of small importance in itself, and which would have been forgotten the day after, but for its connection with another scene of so deeply tragical a character as to fix it forever in my memory.

On a few acres of the Red Leaf land lived a

poor white family, named Stokes, consisting of father, mother, and five children. The eldest of the children was a lad of about thirteen years. The Stokes' father, before the war broke out had earned an humble support by working at the carpenter's trade. Like the great majority of the poor whites in the South, he was fully as zealous for secession as the lordliest slaveholder in the land, and had enlisted in the Gordon Guards to fight against the Union. During the father's absence the family was fed and clothed by Mrs. Devaseur. The lad, called by the negroes "the Stokes' boy," came to the Red Leaf mansion about once a-week for supplies, taking home rations of meal, meat, salt, sugar, &c., in a small waggon drawn by a pony. As I sat resting, and partially hidden from passers by the trunk of a tree, I saw the Stokes' boy coming on with his little waggon containing his week's supply. From the opposite side of the road rose a figure I had not seen as I passed—Preacher Jim.

He must have been lying on the ground behind

some bushes, else he would not have escaped my vision. He waited by the roadside until the Stokes' boy came up, then went out and seized the pony's bridle, and began to take off the harness. An altercation ensued between the boy and the black. Preacher Jim told the boy he was acting under the orders of the Union captain, "who was a-gitten' up every rebel hoss in the country."

The boy began to cry and expostulate, but of course had to submit, and saw Jim mount his pony and ride away. Overcome by the sudden loss of an animal he loved, and the poor prospect of getting his provisions home, the little fellow sat down on the waggon shafts and wept bitterly.

I suspected this story was a fabrication of Jim's. I did not believe Captain Pym had commissioned him to gather up horses from rebels, and if he had, of what use to the Government and the army would be a small animal—a child's pony? I resolved to speak to the Captain,

and get the pony back, if possible. Preacher Jim was hardly out of sight before a soldier on horseback came up from the direction Jim had taken. He was a slender, boyish-looking, fellow, and rode at full gallop. Seeing the waggon in the middle of the road, and the boy weeping, he reined in his horse and asked what had happened. The boy told his tale. Without a word the man wheeled his horse around, and galloped back the way he had come. Almost instantly he came galloping up again, holding the pony by the bridle, the pony's neck and head stretched out, and his short ducky legs doing their best to keep up with the long lopes of the larger horse.

The negro Jim, in an agony of fear lest he should be dashed to the ground, bent his body forward, lying flat on the animal's neck, both arms hugging it closely.

Whether from the sudden pull up of the horse, or the energetic shake the pony gave his head, expressive of intense indignation at the unusual load on his neck, I could not tell—the result was,

that Preacher Jim lay sprawling in the middle of the road in front of the waggon.

The boy wiped his eyes with his jacket sleeve, and stared in affright. A Union soldier was an object of terror to all rebels, old and young.

"Pick yourself up, sir," commanded the young horseman, "and harness that pony pretty quick!"

Preacher Jim did pick himself up, and shook himself as a dog does, to free himself of dust, all the time eyeing the man in blue uniform with a strange look of astonishment.

It was something new in his experience that a Union soldier should take the part of a Secesh white against a loyal black. It confused and amazed the African mind, much as it might confuse the minds of scientists should any well-known law of nature move from its regularity of action and turn to unexpected paths. Dazed at the new course the givers of freedom seemed to be taking, Jim fumbled with the harness in an awkward way, until stirred to briskness by a sharp cut from the soldier's whip.

"Now," said the Union boy, after the animal was attached to the waggon, "you black rascal, mind how you meddle with boys again! Drive on youngster."

The rebel boy, hardly believing in his good luck, did not budge until a second order to drive on convinced him he really had the right once more to claim the pony as his own. Preacher Jim gazed at the retreating waggon with a melancholy air.

"Meb—meb—mebby," he stuttered—when in any distress or confusion of mind the Preacher was apt to stammer—"Meb—meb—mebby, sir, you doesen't me—me—member. *I's* a loyal nigger, *I* is, en da—da—dat ar white boy's daddy is a—a—a Secesh—in de Secesh army, *he* is."

"You're a black scoundrel! I've a great mind to hang you right up now on the nearest tree. Get out of my sight—*fast!*" He pulled his pistol from his belt, and cocked it. "*Fast!* if you don't want daylight let through your ugly black skull!"

For one brief instant the negro stood and stared, his mouth open, his eyes wild. Had he gazed on the falling firmament, or the wide gaping earth, his consternation would have been no greater. *This* from one of the men who had come to conquer Secesh and free the negro! Preacher Jim's senses reeled on the brink of insanity.

However, after one moment's confusion, his mind mastered the situation. The sight of the pistol was comprehensive. Jim broke and ran, his coat tails standing out behind him. A shot in the air from the pistol added to his speed. The young soldier indulged himself in a burst of hilarity as he watched the rapid retreat of Jim's bandy legs.

I had left my seat and gone nearer the road for a better view of the scene. Not until the white boy with the waggon, and Preacher Jim's revolving legs were out of sight, did the soldier turn his face in my direction. At the first glimpse he caught of me he wheeled around and

galloped off. I wondered why. Was he afraid I would report to his captain? Did he think Captain Pym would reprove or punish him for forcing a negro to make restitution to a white?

I went on to the place where I expected to find One-eyed Sampson. He had cast his lines in the "lucky water," and fastened the rods to a drifting log that lay on the water's edge, while he himself leaned back against the log, lazily nodding and waiting for a bite.

I stood for a moment in silence, looking at this full-bred African—he seemed unconscious of my approach—looking at the coarse black face, the thick lips, flat nose, and spiky head, and for the first time a doubt darted into my mind as to the brotherhood of the black and the white races. *Are* the two races descended from the same progenitors?

I asked him what luck he was having. He grumbled out his discontent. "Dar was somefin in de ar—de fishes 'fused to bite. Storms, or mebbe hurrykins."

After a long pause, I asked what were his future plans? Now that he was free to choose his own life, to work out his own fate, what did he intend to do?

I could not have hit on a better device: it led direct to the thing I wanted.

"Well, mum," grumbled the giant, "yer sees things is monsus unsartain. We's done quit cotton—me and Preacher Jim, we is. We don't hab no sorter liken for rows of long cotton—a hoen and a hoen from one eend to de oder eend, cler cross' de feel. We's done bid far-well to de cotton feels; en ef we gits to do dat little job for de Capen, it'll fotch a right smart pile o' money. Den we is a notion o' gwine down to Orleens, and fallen into easy jobs, and liven like gentl'men; *dat's* Jim and me."

I trembled with eager curiosity, and hesitated lest a betrayal of interest would put him on his guard, and check his loquacity.

With an air of indifference I questioned: "What hinders you and Preacher Jim from

doing the job, and getting the money? With a smart sum of money, you know you and Jim might set yourselves up in some snug business in the city, and live like gentlemen sure enough."

"Dat's so! dat's de bery thing we's arter! But you see, mum"—rolling his one reddened eye slowly at me—"you see, mum, it 'pears monsus easy to de Capen, en he rather feels hard like to Jim an me, 'case we haint done dat job; but de Capen, *he* doant want no 'spicion to rest on him in de matter, by no means; an' Preacher Jim, *he* say, 'How we gwine fotch her to de boat dout dem sodgers sist in de business; en what's de use o' haben Union sodjers 'cepin dey does what der officers wants em ter do?' So dar's de split —dars whar de Capen an we don't gree togedder. Capen Pym he wont not let us hab dem sodjers; en how we gwine to get hole o' dat 'ooman?"

What woman was this they wanted to get hold of? and for what purpose?

I said after a moment's reflection—

"It seems to me you and Preacher Jim must

be very stupid not to be able to oblige Captain Pym—Where is the difficulty?—Captain Pym, a great Union officer, who came down from the North to free your people."

He looked convicted of ingratitude, and answered, in an apologising tone, "Dat he knowed bery well niggers oughter zert derselves to please Union officers. But you see, mum, de difficulties in de way. How is me an Jim gwine kotch Miss Gertrude out a walkin' by hersef in de dus of de night, when she won't neber go out by hersef in de dus ob de night? *We's* done tried dat game—we's done watch for a week, an she neber comes outen de great-hus by hessef, day nor night; dat dar Miss Clary, she's long side o' her ebery time."

He paused, as if expecting some rejoinder from me. I said—

"Yes; that does seem a difficulty."

"Dat's it, mum," he went on, feeling that I appreciated his argument; "dat's it; en Jim an me, we tells de Capen for to jis step forred wid

dem sodjers o' hisen en get de gal he wants right outen de house. What's to hender? Aint he a Union officer, en *dey* Secesh?"

This was the logic of war. This was the Right of Might Doctrine. The negro's and the statesman's logic is much the same—the difference lies in the application.

"So you have given up the job as a bad one?" I asked, rising to go.

"No, mum," he muttered, pulling at his pole to change its position, in the hope of finding a luckier spot; "no, mum, we haint 'zactly gin it up; but de Capen's monsus unsartain. He gin strict orders we must tole Miss Gerty keerfully, hurtin nary har ob her head, an stric orders dat de job mus be done in de dus ob de night, becase he's monsus ticlar dat no nigger en no white pusson shall ketch de fust hint o' de business. I'se as sho as shooten, if dese Red Leaf niggers kotch a 'spicion dat Miss Gerty is a bein took off, dey'd get up an tar me an Jim to pieces—dey would dat."

I walked on toward the house—a wild turmoil in my breast, a thousand contending thoughts in mind; but over them all rose one thought to rule me like a masterful demon. I could not banish or quell it. It possessed me, and filled me, and forced me to follow its bidding.

It pressed upon me its devilish suggestions, it pierced me through and through with its persistent purpose, it conquered, and subdued, and drove forth from the citadel of the mind all other thoughts, and ruled and reigned alone.

"Should Miss Gordon," was the devilish argument of this masterful demon, "disappear from her home on the same day that the Union forces depart, will not the two events be linked together? Have not slaves' eyes," suggested the demon, "seen the ill-concealed infatuation of the officer? Will slaves not whisper one to another? Will not suspicions and scandals grow thick in the air?" But the master-stroke of the demon was reserved for his last argument.

"*May not Lynn Devaseur himself,*" was

his devilishly cunning suggestion, "*totally unacquainted with this Union captain, totally ignorant of his mean construction, body and mind, in his imagination invest him with such high and strong qualities as win woman's eye? May not he, too, the Master, fall into the general idea that she went with a Union officer—went willingly?*"

Among the many men and women who will read these pages, will there be none who have suffered the pangs of despised love as I have suffered?—the mean but keen pain of jealousy, the eating cancer of envy? If such there be among my readers, they will understand the intense and unconquerable longing that at times possessed me to drive my rival out of sight—out of sight for ever!

There had been moments of my life when the desire to get rid of her was so great that my hands of themselves would thrust out and strike —*only* the air, for *she* was not by.

And oft in imagination, in the deep dark night,

when my longing was strong upon me, I have felt as if we two, she and I, were together on the brink of some deep abyss, and so powerful was the illusion, I would strain my eyes on the dark to see her form whirling down to the bottom, and listen for the *thud* her body would make as it broke on the rocks below.

As I walked on toward the house, this feeling rose within me, more daring and menacing than ever before. The accomplishment of my desire seemed near at hand, the fruition of my most ardent hope almost a reality.

I met Captain Pym on the lawn. The devil that possessed me prompted me to plunge at once into the subject. I asked him if he doubted my loyalty, if he thought *I* would be less willing to oblige Union officers than negroes like One-eyed Sampson and Preacher Jim?

He looked at me amazed.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, still rushing on, "I know all about your plans. Unless you set sharper wits to work than those two negroes possess you

will never succeed. Do you know Lieutenant Reese marries one cousin, and carries both to Kentucky next week?"

"I'll be d—d if he does!"

"How will you prevent it!"

"He may take his own girl, and welcome, but he don't take *mine!*"

"How will you prevent it?"

"I'll take her to New Orleans. That's how I'll prevent it. It won't take ten minutes for Major Bell to set her free from that disgraceful rebel marriage. I'll marry her myself. You can see for yourself she's a deuced too fine a girl to throw herself away on a—a"—he hesitated for an adjective strong enough, and finally used his old favourite, "Secesh sneak. *I* intend to marry her so soon as she gets her divorce. You see I really don't intend any harm to the young lady, but a great good."

"Certainly," I assented, amazed at his sincere belief in himself.

"Certainly, as you say. She'll be the first

to thank me when it's all done," he hastened to add.

"Certainly," I again said in still greater amaze.

"You may depend on *me*, Miss Stanhope, when I give my word I'll keep it; when Martyr Pym says he'll do a thing, he means to do it. You need have no fears on *that* point. I'll marry her. I'll make it all right. She can't hesitate between a loyal officer in the great Union army and a rebel sneak in the half-starved rag-tag Secesh army. Think she can? Eh? *You* know her? What do you think?"

"Yes, I know Gertrude Gordon."

"She wouldn't hesitate? eh?"

"Not an instant."

I answered truly; yet the truth he understood not. Besotted with vanity and self-conceit, he smiled, and smirked, and stroked his weak moustache, lighted a cigar, and puffed in silence for a minute or two.

Why is it, when a man's vanity is under process of titillation, he always resorts to a cigar?

Does the stimulus of smoking increase the power of the titillation? Or does it so weaken and soothe the masculine system as to make it more easily succumb to the pleasure of titillation?

"Does Miss Gordon," I asked, "understand the honour you intend her?"

"Oh yes; we understand one another," he answered, in apparently good faith. Then, after a moment's pause, and not quite so confidently, he added, "I haven't fully explained to her all my plans. That confounded cousin of hers is always in the way. She never gives me a chance to say a word in private. I'll be confounded if I don't believe the little one is setting her cap at me too! It looks very much like it."

"You think, then," I asked, looking at his small smug face and neat insignificant figure, and silently marvelling at the manner of man before me, "You think, then, Miss Clara Devaseur cares nothing for the young lieutenant?"

"Oh, well! after a fashion—*perhaps*, he answered with a perfectly confident air. It

seemed to say, Oh yes, she likes him well enough when there's no better looking man about. After a pause, he went on—"*I* know the sex. They're all alike; awful sweet on a fellow till another comes along richer or better looking, then they drop the first fellow and take the tother, as quick as wink. *That's* the way with a woman." While I was considering how my scheme might be carried out, he said—"By the way, a friend of mine, a Congregationalist preacher, is with us now on board the boat. I tried to get him to come up and see the ladies, but he wouldn't. If Reese and his girl choose they can get my parson to tie the knot. He's a wide-a-wake fellow for a parson, I tell you; and keeps a sharp look out for the main chance. It's a sort of saying with our officers, that the parson gets the edge on us. He can smell a rebel cotton bale a mile off. The General sends him round among the planters, preaching and praying, and talking peace and Secesh soft-sawder; and I tell you, if there's any cotton bales hid in the woods,

or sugar hogsheads in cellars, the parson finds it out."

"I do not think there is any more cotton on the Red Leaf place. Be his smell ever so acute, he will find no more."

"Oh, he does not come *here* to nose out cotton. I fancy *I* have pretty well finished *that* business. No; he was on his way to a place fifty miles up the river; got frightened about guerrillas, and put himself under *my* protection, to be safely delivered up in New Orleans."

"*You* have no fear of guerrillas?" I asked, struck with his confident air of bravado.

"The rebel sneaks! why, they run at the sight of a Union soldier. You may just mention to Reese, if you choose, about the parson. It may be he's got enough loyalty in him to prefer a truly loyal parson to one of these Secesh fellows."

Before we parted it was understood that I was to assist him in his scheme to possess Miss Gordon. The plan I proposed was simple; but

it was enough. The work I did was little; but it was deadly.

On the following day I put into the Captain's hand a note, with only two lines of writing in it. But the two lines resembled the Master's, and asked her to meet him at a place indicated, on the border of the woods, but a short distance from the house. This forged note was to be given to Miss Gordon about four or five o'clock in the afternoon—an hour when usually her aunt was resting in her chamber, and her cousin was in the library with her young lover. The hour was chosen on the presumption that she would act on the impulse of the moment, and fly to meet the man she adored, without interrupting either aunt or cousin to speak of it to them.

Once on the border of the woods, out of sight of the Red Leaf people, it was the part of Preacher Jim and One-eyed Sampson to take her to the old burial cave in the mound, and there hold her until the darkness of night

rendered it safe to transfer her to Captain Pym's care on the boat. It was the Captain's earnest wish that his own men should get no inkling that the lady was captured by force. Once on the steamer, locked in a cabin, it would be easy enough to make it appear to the soldiers and boatmen that she had come on board of her own accord.

CHAPTER V.

CRIME IS EPIDEMIC IN THE LAND.

BEFORE going on to the dreadful end——. But no; I feel it is useless. I know too well that no excuse I can offer will make the deed I have done one shade less black, one atom less vile. I could but know then, even as I know now, that the fate to which I sent her would necessarily prove disastrous to her happiness, if not to her life. I well knew that such a high and refined nature as Miss Gordon's would shrink from any contact with a nature so antagonistic as Pym's—shrink with a pain which, if long continued, would lead to death.

It may be asked, Was I insane enough to imagine, that from the freedom that would come to the Master through *her* destruction, any gain

would accrue to me?—would bring *me* any nearer to *him?*

Who can find logical reasons for the commission of crime? Reason and crime are everlastingly opposed. In proportion as reason gains ground in the world crime will decrease. Sometimes in my torturing conflicts of mind, when one thought rises up and contends with another, the suggestion comes that all crime is insanity, and all selfishness a lesser degree, and I the craziest of them all. Then comes a contradictory thought, which boldly questions the very nature of crime, and hints a suspicion that evil is but an excess of good, that every propensity that leads to evil is implanted in man for useful purpose. Destructiveness, alimentiveness, acquisitiveness, if in excess, may and do lead to evil; yet, are they not useful to the existence of man? What quality is more hateful than the greed for gain? Yet, without this quality, where now would be the world? In the very night of barbarism. Desire for gain served as a prick and

spur to the energies of man. It built ships, and sent them over dangerous seas; it started and sustains commerce; commerce between nations quickens and enlarges the intellects of man. Desire for gain clears forests, builds cities, and plants fields, gathers grain, and grinds and bakes. Mankind in common with beasts and birds feel the strong impulse to eat. It is a purely animal instinct, but without doubt was the first spur applied to the energies of savage man which set him to work. Hunger first made man rise up from his crawling position, and walk on his feet, leaving his fore limbs free to gather the fruits and nuts of the forest. Even in this day there are many spurred to labour by sharp hunger. I have known negroes in the South who regularly stop work and take to the woods to live on berries and persimmons when those fruits are ripe. When the fruits and nuts are gone, they come up willing to work. If bread and butter grew on the trees in the forest, on the bushes and brambles by the way-side, these negroes

would never work. So it was in primeval times with our forefathers, as they were emerging from their savage condition. Little by little mankind has acquired habits of industry and forethought. Some writer has said, I know not whom, and only quote from memory, "When man first wandered in the dark forest he was nature's serf. The elements were his deities, and the wild animals his masters. The lightning, and the winds, and the rain he strove to propitiate with prayer." He trembled under the tyranny of the beasts. The lions and the wolves made him afraid. As time passed on, man ventured to rebel. He made stone his servant; he discovered fire, and subdued it to his will; he domesticated iron; he slew the wild beasts, or made them serve him with food and clothes.

Yet to these, the first steps toward the splendid civilisation now attained, man was spurred by the instincts of alimentiveness, destructiveness, and acquisitivenes, the most selfish propensities. Reason and freedom, the grandest gifts the gods

have given to man—more precious than gold, more scarce than platinum—in those early times had no lodgement in the brain or breast of man. Alas! even now how small a space in the human brain does reason rule in! and where on earth does freedom dwell?

Selfishness is the great master that moves men to action. Selfish lust of power, or greed of gain, makes one nation march on another to subdue and conquer.

How horrible, how intense and active, must be the selfishness in that nation's heart that goes to war for conquest—that builds ships, and casts cannon, and moulds millions of bullets, and marshals men to murder and pillage, ravage, hunt, and destroy a people merely to hold rule over them! How awful must that seem in the sight of Being who looks down on the actions of men!

And Creation, the glorious universe, looks on while the war is waging, and claps its hands in applause, and shouts "Bravo, bravo!" and deems the cry in the van, the moment of the

nation, crowned with success, even though the crown be dripping with human gore, even though the success cost billions of money and thousands of lives, even though the wail of war-made widows, and war-made orphans, goes up from every village, and city, and house in the land.

Although in times of war selfishness is so rampant and fiercely active; in times of peace does it any the less dominate the daily lives of men? Does it not permeate with its mean poison every institution in the land? Are not law, society, custom, and government, woofed and warped with selfishness? Trade runs on it, commerce sails on it, politics prosper on it.

How subtle and deep-rooted the spirit of selfishness seen in the rule exercised by the male of the human species over the female. The male of no animal on earth—save of the human—abuses its female, kicks, cuffs, and cowes her to his will. The male of no animal on earth—save of the human—arrogates the right to deprive mothers of their young.

Is it objected by the unreasoning that this selfishness is only exhibited by the vulgar and low of the human family?

I answer, the highest authority in the land gives licence to the low and vulgar thus to abuse and maltreat the female of the human species. The law tells man he is master, and woman, she is subject; the law tells the male she is his to use as he likes.

Nor is this selfish coercion confined to the low and brutal. The highest of the males in the land, the lawyers, the doctors, the divines, the statesmen, and soldiers, act on the same basic principle. Should a woman from among their class, cast on the world to earn her own support, desire to fill any of the lucrative offices, to pursue any of the learned and lucrative professions, is she encouraged and assisted in her efforts? Ah, no! Every man is her enemy, and all men selfishly unite to drive her back to the poor paying trades allotted to women.

The male of no animal—save of the human—

thus selfishly arrogates the right to graze in rich pastures, and push back the females to barren spots and stony grounds.

Since man so uniformly and universally yields to the selfish instincts which seem to dominate his character—since this selfishness is widespread throughout the land and every heart is tainted with its poison—is it any wonder that now and then in some unfortunate woman's breast it gathers and grows and culminates in crime?

Crime is a *dis*-ease of the moral faculties, as fevers are diseases of the physical.

Dis-ease of the mind and morals may become epidemic, and spread through a community as diseases of the body spread and prevail.

WAR, the greatest monster that ever trod the earth, may be said to be the embodiment of the selfishness of the millions who make the nation that wages the war. To the high Being who, from His throne of Justice above, looks down on the actions of men, how hideous must be the aspect of this monster engendered from the com-

bined selfishness of forty millions of human souls!

When the monster stalks over the land, from his blood-stained hands he scatters every evil possible to humanity. He breaks all bonds, strikes down law, and tramples order under his feet.

He makes a moral chaos, and sets despotism to rule over it.

Is it any wonder the sons of Mars are the adherents and advocates of despotic governments? A general is the god of the legions he leads, his officers are but inferior deities. Their commands are absolute and obeyed without question or thought. Men are moved, like machines, by a will *outside*, and totally independent of their own. The process inevitably smothers every spark of freedom, and presses down out of sight every effort of reason. What use have dull machines for the divine faculty of reason?

Few escape the evil influences that prevail during war. Few are the nations that come out pure from the moral chaos that exists.

What but the moral chaos of the four years' war in America causes the corruption now so wide-spread over the land?

The one lesson men learned during the war was the savage lesson, MIGHT MAKES RIGHT. This is always the lesson of the sword. It is thundered in cannon and shot in shell; it is whizzed through the air by millions of rifle balls; it clatters from the iron-shod feet of the thousands of cavalry horses that gallop over the country; it clinks from the sabres, and gleams from the bayonets' point. Who can wonder that war turns back the tide of civilization which times of peace begin to roll up and on?

I, like all the people in the Union, went mad, and was possessed by the spirit of war. It drove me like a demon; it made itself the ally of my passion; it egged on the envy and jealousy of my nature, and the three united and goaded me to crime.

"She is one of the slave-aristocrats," said the demon of war; "drag her down."

"She is a rebel and traitor to the best government on earth," said the demon; "let her die as rebels and traitors deserve to die."

And I hearkened to the demon's voice, for I was filled full with the evil spirit of war.

Was I the only one who hearkened to that misleading voice?

What but the demoniacal spirit of war stirred in the hearts of so many loyal men and officers, as they marched over the rebel South, laying waste the fields, burning houses, and leaving ruin in their tracks?

Whither went the wretched women, once happy mothers in those homes left in ashes? Alas! and alas! they went wandering to and fro over a desolate land, houseless, homeless, husbandless, "hollow-eyed with hunger, their children cried for bread, and there was none to give them." *

And what but this same demon of war entered

* In the beginning of the war, a writer in the *New York Tribune* said, he "hoped he might live to see Southern women hollow-eyed with hunger, and their children beg for bread, and none to give them."

the breasts of Southern men when they "*lost*" their prisoners of war, as they carried them through Southern forests, and jested over such "losses?"

This great government gathers the bodies and the bones of its brave dead from the hundred battle-fields on which they fell fighting for the "Union" they had made into an idol, and to which they gave an idolatrous worship; gathers from the prison-pens, the trenches and the ditches, and lays them away in consecrated ground; and carven stones are set over the sacred hillocks, and loving hands strew flowers, and annual pilgrimages are made in honour of their memory. But in the dark forests throughout the South, where trees grow grandest, and under-brush the thickest, on the desolate pine hills of Alabama, in the swamps of Georgia, and the everglades of Florida, yet sleep soldiers of that great idol, the "UNION," "lost," by their rebel captors, for ever lost to life and friends and country.

No stone marks the spots they lie in. No flowers bedeck their lonely beds; no eye drops tears for them. But in winter the wind wails through the tall pines that tower above them, and in summer, the birds build their nests and sing their love songs in bush and bough, and the "lost" soldiers in the unknown graves will sleep on through the ages as sweetly as they who rest under carved stone in consecrated ground.

I offer not these evidences of crime as an excuse for mine. I but state the fact that the moral sense of the people, North and South, was diseased or dulled by the war. Perhaps more than others I suffered from this epidemic that afflicted the land, this moral malaria that corrupted the consciences of the people.

Nor will I deny the possibility that the poor pale shade of a Hope may still have haunted my heart, and may have received some access of strength, some influx of life from that meeting in the woods, where the Master looked into my

eyes and saw the secret of my soul, and left on my forehead a touch no time could efface. That ghostly hope, which reason had not power to banish, nor will utterly crush, may not have all forgotten her illusive dream, that in *his* desolation, *his* fall from the high places of prosperity to the low places of poverty; from the wealth of a great and glorious love, to the utter and outer darkness that would engulf him, were *she* swept out beyond his reach, the dream that I, even I, might become something in his path of life,—something, though it were but a slave to serve him on bended knee, though it were a bond slave to crouch at his feet and lie there, and die there, so *she* were not there also, so *she* were afar off out of sight, out of sound.

I could well understand the poet who longed to be "lost sight of, hidden away out of sight," with the one being he loved,—

> "Out of the world's way, out of the light,
> Out of the ages of worldly weather;
> Made *one* with death, filled full of the night;
> Forgotten as the world's first dead are forgotten."

CHAPTER VI.

MY DREADFUL TREACHERY.

THE note was written, the snare was spread, and the bird made haste to fly into it.

She was standing on the front portico, ready to take her usual evening walk to the river bank, when a strange negro—not a Red Leaf slave, handed her a scrap of paper. The negro told her he had "met a tall, light complected man in de woods; de man had given him a dollar in 'fedrit money to fotch de note to de Red Lif gret hus, and gin it to a lady wid dark eyes and har."

I stood by in breathless suspense, and heard the negro's story. It sounded so genuine, and the writing so like *his*, not a suspicion crossed her mind. Without a word, without stopping to

think, she walked rapidly away. The sun was not set when she started, but dark clouds were rolling up from the south, and covered his face. The air was sultry and still, that ominous stillness that precedes a storm. The fowls of the air seemed to feel mysterious apprehensions; their happy songs were turned to discordant shrieks; the barn-yard birds were strangely agitated; stretching out their necks they croaked and fluttered as if an enemy were hovering over them.

As the sun went down to his nightly place of rest on the western side of the broad old river, through the rifts of clouds piling up over the western sky, shafts of sun-light were shot on the Red Leaf house and lawn, which, for a moment, kindled it to a brief and golden glory. The white pillars of the portico, the tall turret, and the high slated roof, were bathed in the beautiful rays, while the windows gleamed out on the scene like flameful eyes. As the golden hopes of the human heart too soon fade to ashen

gray, so faded all that splendid light into gray and dusky evening, and all too soon was lost in the gloom of night.

I walked to the river bank, and turned an anxious eye toward the place where lay the Federal boat so soon to bear *her* away, as I hoped, forever. I had understood from Captain Pym that everything was in readiness for the boat to go, and that it would start so soon as Miss Gordon was placed on board. It was thought she could safely be transferred from her negro keepers to the charge of the Captain by half-past seven or eight o'clock.

I stood on the bank of the river expecting every moment to see, or rather to hear, the boat steam by; it was now too dark to see any objects on land or water, save for the brief instant the lightning showed them.

I looked back at the house; a heavy pall hung over it, which seemed the blacker when the lightning flashed. Gusts of wind came whirling through the moss-hung trees. I listened with

strained ear; it seemed that on the wind came human shrieks, like the shrieks of dying or despairing souls.

I went back to the house; I could not find rest or peace in any spot; I paced up and down the portico floor; I listened for the striking of the hall clock, for it must now be eight; I listened for the sound of the passing boat; and I paced up and down the floor's length, as some doomed spirit might pace the path allotted it to walk in the world of perdition.

She had left the house about four o'clock; her feet naturally flew to meet—alas! not *him*, the white, the peerless master; but the two black slaves, with hearts blacker than their bodies. Surely it was now dark enough for any deed; yet still no sound of the passing boat. Had anything mischanced? It seemed quite certain the negroes had succeeded in their design of seizing her, else she would have returned to the house. I had kept a sharp look out, and was sure she had not returned. What delayed the boat?

My uneasiness became intense, I walked in the dark lest some eye should see it in my face, and read therein my guilty soul. It was with difficulty I could hold quiet my strung nerves; my impulse was to shriek, and cry aloud, and wring my hands. With strong effort I subdued the impulse and made no noise. I flattered myself that when once the boat were on its way to the city, my mind would find peace. Pym had sworn a solemn oath, let what would come, to no human ear on earth would he betray the part I had taken in this nefarious business. Yet the fear that in some way, by some means, the fact would become known, caused me the most harrowing anxiety. I was on the dark porch, the black sky above, the dense shadow without and around, lighted up at intervals by flashes of lightning. Strong gusts of wind blew up from the south-west. As I walked the floor I passed and re-passed the library window, the astral lamp burned on the table, shedding its soft light on the young lovers yet living in the land of dreams. They sat side

by side, looking on the same page, from which he read as she listened. *They* were in a peaceful paradise, *I* in a stormy hell.

Suddenly a cry went out on the night; exclamations of wonder and surprise broke from the negroes, who had gone out on the north portico to look at the portentous sky.

Mr. Reese and Miss Devaseur left their reading, and ran to learn the cause of such excitement. I followed. Every negro about the house flocked up agape, and open eyed in wonder.

In the direction of the Federal boat a commotion seemed going on; in the lulls of the strong wind there came to us sounds of voices, shouts and yells, and wild halloos, and, in quick succession, rifle reports.

A conflict was going on. We stood in breathless suspense. The negroes from the cabins came trooping up, curious, and alarmed at this small part of the great war's near proximity to them.

Who can ever know the torturing anxiety of that hour? As we stood, our eyes fixed on the

midnight gloom, the confusion of the conflict faintly coming to us in the lulls of the wind, we saw a sudden light stream up from the spot where the boat lay. It was not the lightning, it was not the flash from rifle guns. Another blaze streamed up, and a brighter, until the heavy clouds were lurid, and the red rays warmed up the black bosom of the river.

The negroes were the first to speak, to give voice in their rude way to the thought we all had.

"De Yankee boat is took by de 'Fedrits! De 'Fedrits is done sot de boat a-fire!" said one negro.

"Hi! yi! De Secesh is got 'em," yelled another.

"See dat blaze!"

"Dat ar Yankee boat done gone up de spout!"

"You bet!"

"Hurrah for ole Jeff Davis!"

Thus it always is with the large majority of men, black or white; they shout for the victor. Success wins the homage of the unthinking.

By this time a great blaze was flaring up from the boat. I was confounded and stunned by this unexpected turn.

Reese uttered no word of comment. The girl by his side looked on in silence, her hand clasped in his.

Little did she know how near was the connection between that burning boat and those she loved so well.

"Dem's de bush whackers," said one; "dey's scary folks, dem bush whackers; one on 'em's ekel to a dozen Yankees, I tell you."

"Gorillas is de wustist; I'd rather a wild bar ud get arter me nor a gorilla. Heah dey comes! Heah's de 'Fedrits. I hope Mas Lynn's long wid 'em! Don't you heah de hosses' feet?"

Yes; the tramp of horses' feet, nearer, nearer, was plainly heard.

I held my breath in a bitter suspense. What changes were wrought by this frustration of our plans? Was *she* already freed from the snare we had caught her in?

What agony is equal to the agony of suspense? the worst reality is better than suspense. What dread so heavy, so horrible to bear, as the dread of a crime or a baseness coming up to the light of day; *bare* under the eyes of those whose respect you care for? What misery like the fear of a scorn you feel you merit. *My* punishment began in the hour of my crime.

As the flames of the burning boat began to fade from the black sky, and pale on the black bosom of the water, the tramp of the horses' feet, and the clatter of the horsemen's sabres, sounded nearer and nearer.

On came that rebel band. They rode up triumphant and jubilant—a company of cavalry. They had burned one boat, slain some of our men, and wounded and captured the rest. They had burned the captured cotton, and thrown the captured sugar into the river; set free the negroes who intended to enlist in the Union army, and retained the Union horses.

Foremost of all that rebel band rode the young

Master of Red Leaf. Like some gallant knight of the old heroic time, he sat on his splendid steed, which moved as though a part of the rider it bore. Lifting his hat as he neared us, the night wind blowing back his fair hair, he saluted the group with his old stately grace, the grave sadness still in his aspect and his eyes.

He swept a glance over the crowd that greeted him. *She* was not there. His brow, a kingly one, on which ever seemed to sit a crown of high thoughts, which more became it than any of gold and costly gems, shone white as marble by the fitful flashes of the lightning, or the red glare of the pine torch one of the negroes held.

His mother and cousin were among the slaves that met him with welcoming words; *but where was she?* He sprang from his horse, embraced his mother, spoke kind words to the eager slaves, was presented to the Ex-Lieutenant—the North and the South clasped hands in a friendly greeting, and looked around for that other, that dearer one, who was not there.

His look was understood and answered by his mother.

"Constance has not left her chamber; she knows nothing of all this."

Then Miss Devaseur's clear voice called out—

"Constance!"

There was no response.

"Never mind, I will go to her," said the Master.

As he went through the hall, he asked his mother if his hungry men could be fed? The servants hastened to obey a master they loved. Then turning to me, he besought my kind attention to wounded prisoners; they were being brought to the house. He especially requested I would look after a young man, almost a boy, badly wounded, who had fought to the last with unexampled courage. "Had every man among the enemy," said the Master, "been as hard to conquer as this boy, the victory would not have been ours."

He left me, and I heard his feet flying up the

stair-way, two steps at a time, flying to *her* chamber. Clenching my teeth to still my agitation, which threatened every moment to pass all bounds, I watched for the rebel guard who were bringing up the Union prisoners. The Union men were brought in waggons, taken from the Union boat before setting it on fire.

I looked sharply among the prisoners in search of Captain Pym; he was neither among the wounded nor the well. Was he among the slain?

I listened to the excited talk of these traitors, their animated rehearsal of the scene, the small but fierce fight they had won. It seemed that the Union force was taken by surprise, was wholly ignorant of the approach of the rebels until the boat was seized. The captain and officers of the boat were secured, then commenced the melee. The Union soldiers defended themselves as well as they could, and "that boy," said a rebel with a great oath, "fought like a young tiger. I'll be d——d if I was'nt sorter sorry when I hit him with my pistol ball."

"Did you kill him?" asked another.

"The blood spouted and the boy fell; but he was game to the last; he fired a shot with his left hand; some fellow tied him up, and d——d if he did'nt get up and walk as if nothing was the matter."

I asked what had become of the Union Captain? They knew nothing of him.

The Union prisoners were sullen and dispirited. They seemed to have undefined suspicions that treachery had caused their capture and defeat. The unexplained absence of their Captain added to their gloomy discontent. Nor could they comprehend how, or why, the boat had not started to the city during the afternoon; the men were on board, the cotton, and sugar, and negroes were on board, everything seemed ready, and only waiting Captain Pym's orders to leave the landing and steam down the river. They murmured among themselves, and swore they did'nt like the look of things, and one man was bold enough to swear he believed Captain

Pym had sold and surrendered them to the Rebs. This supposition, however, was not accepted by the majority.

The prisoners not wounded were marched off to the negro church, to lodge there until morning. The rebels were given lodging in the large dining-room and in the ball-room. There were but few wounded; these were put in the spare bedchambers in the Red Leaf mansion, until the hospital could be made ready to receive them.

Philip superintended everything about the house, and Mammy Milly brought linen for bandages, and lint. Rosa went about with her usual lazy air, looking at the wounded men with the same sly, suspicious glances of her dead black eyes she had so often cast on me. Luckily for the wounded soldiers, there was a Union surgeon among the prisoners. He had saved from the burning boat his medical chest and surgical instruments.

Although giving attention, as the Master had requested, to the men that needed it, my whole

mind and heart were drawn in another direction.

The Master had flown up the stairway two steps at a time to meet the woman he loved more than life. She was not where he sought her. Swiftly going from chamber to chamber, he called her name, but she answered not. From room to room below stairs they hurried, calling her name, but she answered not; searching, but finding not.

A strange uneasiness arose in the house; undefined and awful forebodings filled the air. A mysterious doom seemed about to descend and destroy the Red Leaf household.

The wind shrieked around the corners of the house; pallid faces flew hither and thither, up stairs and down stairs; and awe-struck negroes, with wide open eyes, rushed about, starting at the least sound, and looking behind as if ghosts were after them.

She was hunted in chamber, and hall, and turret; she was hunted along the gravelled walks,

in the summer house, in the garden, on the lawn, in the grove, under the melancholy moss-hung trees, in the cabins of the negroes, in the old church, in every possible and impossible place.

No trace was discovered; no clue found.

The strong winds, hitherto held back by some occult force of nature, had now shaken themselves free from all restraint. They came rushing from their wild revels on the southern gulf, or their fierce play on the mountain tops of Mexico, or their unbridled career over the wide pampas of Peru; came on with thunderous crashes, with forked lightning, which fiercely smote the black sky across and athwart as if gigantic demons were at tournament, and the keen gleam of their lances lighted up the white pillars of the portico, the palid faces of the whites, and the awe struck faces of the blacks.

The young Ex-Lieutenant was as active in the search for the missing one as if she had been his sister.

"*Where is she?*" was the one question on black

and white lips, and the strange anxiety in every eye asked it with a deeper dread.

And I, oh God! I, also, in my secret soul said, "*Where is she?*"

Is she in the ancient tomb with the stolid black giant and the slippery black serpent? or, is she with the whiter skinned villains—*safe*, at least from a fate too awful to think of. Even my heart, hating her as it did, shrunk back appalled from the horrible aspect of the deeds the low nature of those negroes might commit. Force, rapine, from the pale-faced puppy of my own race and colour I might be willing should befall her, but the unspeakable horrors half savages might enact I could not contemplate with calm.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORM OF RAIN AND THE STORM OF FATE.

THE storm broke; the wild rain came down in sheeted torrents; the consternation of the unhappy family was at its height. Long enfeebled by ill health, by the anxieties and humiliations incident to the war, Mrs. Devaseur could no longer sustain herself. With a loud, despairing shriek, as if the last vestige of hope had fled from earth, her heart broke, and she fell fainting to the floor.

Her weeping slaves lifted her tenderly, and bore her to her chamber, never more to leave it until those same slaves should bear her out to her last resting-place in the old churchyard.

I was not stone. I could not escape the general horror and consternation of the time. My punishment was begun. In the very core

of my heart a head lifted itself up, the head of a serpent, fanged, and full of venom; forever more, at all hours, awake or asleep, the fangs were fastened in the centre of my heart, and the sting and the pain will end but with my life.

Miss Clara Devaseur, herself the picture of affrighted grief, went to her aunt, and sat by her bedside the livelong night. Lynn Devaseur and Mr. Reese were the last to re-enter the house after their unavailing search. They were drenched by the storm, and sorrow is no word to express their deep distress. The Master's face was set in a voiceless anguish, yet was as a marble god's for whiteness and beauty and grandeur. And oh! as I looked into his eyes, and saw within their depths a fathomless grief, a great wave of pity and remorse and sympathy surged over my guilty soul, as the waves of a molten hell might surge over the souls of the doomed and damned.

He was very calm, and spoke but few words, and those few were to order a servant to call up

every negro on the Red Leaf place. When they came—the old men and the young, the old women and the young, the boys and the girls —it was a sight to see the wonder and fear in their black faces, as they heard the strange story of the disappearance of a young mistress many of them loved and none hated.

The Master questioned them as to when last they had seen the young lady of Red Leaf, and when the last Union soldier was seen on the Red Leaf grounds.

No clue was gained. No one but myself had observed her as she walked away from the house; and every negro was quite positive "Dem Yankees had all left de place, and shet demselves up on dat ar' boat in de fust part ob de day; nary Yankee soldier had been agoin' 'bout since the mornin'—nary one."

Large rewards were offered for any tidings whatever. Black and white scouts were mounted on horses and on mules, and sent to scour the country, and to carry the news to the neighbour-

ing plantations. Every inducement was offered to spur the energies of those sent to search for the missing one.

After making these arrangements, the Master of Red Leaf mounted his horse and rode off in the darkness and the rain.

I stood on the portico and saw him ride away into the wild night, the wind and the lightning and the rain; and the fanged serpent struck deeper into the core of my heart.

Will they find her? Will they find her as she was, peerless and perfect, or fallen and defaced as some high goddess, overthrown, defaced, defiled, by sacrilegious hands—a black beast and a black viper torpid by her side?

So deep was my interest in the search for Miss Gordon, I had forgotten the Master's request, desiring me to give attention to the wounded soldier—the youth whose courage commanded the respect of his rebel foes.

A message from the surgeon, who had been sent to look after the wounded men, reminded

me of my duty. The soldier was in a small room in the rear of the house on the second floor. The other sufferers occupied another and larger room.

The surgeon met me at the door.

"Can I assist you in any way?" I asked.

"If you will persuade this young fellow to submit quietly, you will do good service," he replied.

"Submit to what?"

"To the inevitable. This young man's arm must be amputated; he prefers death."

"If I can assist you—" I began, hardly taking in the meaning of his words, so intensely did another subject absorb my thought.

"But I tell you he says he'll not submit to the operation, he'll die first."

"Will he certainly die if he does not submit?"

"In my judgment it is absolutely necessary to take his arm off. I am astonished at this timidity from so brave a boy. He faced rebel bullets without flinching, but shrinks from the surgeon's

knife. He asks for time to consider. If he is attended to—if the ligatures that prevent hemorrhage do not loosen and let the blood run, he may wait until morning. By that time he will be more composed in his mind, especially if he takes the potion I will give him. By the way, he wanted to see you."

"See me?"

"If you are the New England governess he wants you. I suppose he looks for more sympathy from a Northern woman than from one of those Secesh creatures. Give him this powder now, and if he is restless and suffering, give him the second powder in about three hours."

The doctor went out, and I went up to the bed. He was lying on his left side, his face to the wall in the shadow, so that I could not see it.

"Did you wish to see *me?*" I asked, bending over the bed. There was no response, and no movement to indicate that he had heard me. I repeated the question.

"The surgeon is gone now," I said, thinking

the sight of him and his instruments had terrified the youth.

"Are—we—alone?" asked he in a whisper.

"Yes; he is gone; he has left you a powder to put you to sleep—will you take it now?"

No answer came for several minutes.

"Do you not wish to sleep—sweetly?"

The man was lying on his left side, his face to the wall, his wounded arm, bandaged in towels, was on the outside of the covering across his chest. Suddenly he whirled over, raised up, and looked at me with large luminous eyes—the eyes of a spirit, it seemed to me.

"Don't—you—know me—*Hester?*" asked the spirit slowly, with white lips.

I knew her then. But oh! how changed from the Emily of our childhood! how changed from the Emily of only a few months ago! Then so round and strong and full of vigorous life, now so white and sunk. Her eyes had grown larger, and gone back into her head; in her face was an expression of keen pain.

I offered her the surgeon's opiate; she would not take it. She said she had much to think of, and did not intend to stupify her brain; beside, she feared the doctor meant to put her to sleep to cut off her arm; she did not intend it should be cut off.

Already on the rack of anxiety, was it possible to suffer an access? Already steeped to the lips in misery, could more come?

There is a limit to the human capacity for suffering. As cold, when severe and long continued, benumbs the sensibilities so that we cease to feel the pain of cold, so if mental trouble be severe and long continued, if blow follow blow on any unhappy heart, the sensibilities are dulled to suffering, life will drag on a weary load, but the keen anguish will cease, and the living heart, with all its fine fibres attuned to thrill with many emotions, will become torpid as a toad.

In darker times than these, and these are dark enough; in more cruel and savage times, and these are savage enough; in those dark times

when human beings were stretched on racks and roasted by fierce flames, or baked in dry pans with gradual fire, and thumb-screws were used, and human ingenuity was taxed to invent instruments to wring from men and women the greatest amount of pain; but for the beneficence of nature which had set a limit to the human capacity for feeling pain, the sum of human agony wrought by religious fanatics would have been immensely larger than it was. It is the first stretch on the rack which wrings with most exquisite torture; the first flash of the flame that burns the worst; the first twist of the screw that starts the scream. Every succeeding stretch, every successive flame, every returning twist lessens the capacity to feel, until the victim sinks into the torpidity of death.

So with mental pain. Blow after blow had fallen on my heart, wound followed wound, until I had grown callous to pain. I could suffer no new pangs.

In other times, under happier circumstances, the sight of a sister situated as Emily was, would

have torn my heart with keen grief. The blow fell heavily, it stunned and deadened, but I felt no added sensation of pain.

A dark and quiet feeling came over me, as if the day of judgment were come, and a wide-spread wave of wrath and woe were rolling up to submerge the world.

I looked at Emily in dumb and subdued grief. She was the first to speak.

"Hester," she said, "I suffer greatly; can you give me something?—whisky, chloroform, anything, to quiet this torturing devil of pain that holds me in his grip."

"The surgeon left this powder for that purpose —will you take it now?"

"I tell you no! I do not trust the surgeon, he means to amputate my arm—he shall not! The powder will put me to sleep; I don't want to sleep; I am not ready to sleep yet, when I do sleep it shall be a long one. Get me some chloroform."

I found in the Red Leaf medicine chest a small

bottle of chloroform, not enough to produce insensibility, but sufficient to assuage pain.

"Will you let *me* dress your wound, Emily?" I asked, shaking with a cold, nervous rigour."

"It is dressed well enough," she curtly answered. "Give me another whiff of that stuff. It is like a taste of heaven; it sends me out floating, floating away in space on a balmy breath of air; then this devil pain grips me back by the arm."

I sat by the bedside, now and then pouring the anæsthetic on the napkin as she needed it. Suddenly she began talking as if nothing serious was the matter with her.

"You did not know me, Hester, that day I saw you by the road side? Wasn't it a sight to see that ugly little nigger run? His bandy legs whirled round like the spokes of a wheel. And what a rascal he was!"

Her face seemed to grow whiter and whiter, and the large eyes sunk deeper in her head. What if her life were silently ebbing away, and

nothing done to stay it? I begged her at least to permit the surgeon to see her hurt arm, to dress it for the night, and leave the question of amputation to be settled in the morning.

"He shall not touch me," she angrily answered. "Do you want him to find out I'm a woman? What a row it would make!"

"But if your wound bleeds too much; if—"

"It *can't* bleed too much, it is good to let run such blood as mine; it was spurting out in a beautiful red stream, when some cursed fool tied a string and stopped the flow."

"You did not want it stopped?" I asked, with a dull and numbed perception that something should be done to keep back the death she was coveting.

"*Want it stopped?*" she echoed, looking at me with flameful eyes, all the vigour and warmth of her being seeming centered in her eyes; the rest of her body looking white and cold as marble. "Why should I want it stopped? Why did I put on this dress, and put myself in the

way of rebel bullets? What do *I* want with life? The more blood let of mine the better. Give me the napkin." Still with a dull perception that I must make some effort to save her, I asked if she meant to throw away her life rather than lose an arm?

"Don't look so miserable, Hester," she said. "Thousands of men, the best the country affords, die fighting for the Union; why should not a worthless woman?"

After this there was silence for a long time. She lay quiet, not a groan, not a moan breaking the stillness. Although my energies were numbed, and my sensibilities torpid, still the dull perception remained, and made itself heard, that something for her relief should be done that I was not doing—that some one beside myself should be there to advise and assist. Since she was so set against the surgeon, I suggested a minister. I recalled the fact that Captain Pym had spoken of a Congregational preacher who was on his boat, waiting to return to the city.

This preacher was doubtless with the Union prisoners. Even if Emily would not accept his ministrations, such was the lassitude and prostration of my own mind, I felt the need of some sustaining power beyond myself. At the first mention of the minister, Emily started up and gazed intently at me.

"Have you seen him?" she asked.

I had not seen him, and could not be certain that he was among the prisoners; he might be with Pym, wherever that was; but I told her I would go in search of him.

"He is with the prisoners," she said. "I saw him while the skirmish was going on, and after, on our way here."

"Would you not like to see him now, Emily? You cannot forget all the teachings of your childhood. Religion—"

She cut me short—"That will do. Go and get your preacher, and make him come and pray for my sinful soul. The prayers of the righteous are heard."

I descended the stairs, and found everything silent and sad. The house wore a desolate air, as if death dwelt in it. A dim light burned in the hall. Philip sat sleeping in one of the hall chairs. Mr. Reese walked from room to room, a solitary sentinel, keeping watch during the melancholy night. Ever and anon he went to Mrs. Devaseur's chamber door to learn her state of health, and to give one word, or one look, or one pressure of the hand, to uphold the courage of his betrothed. Miss Devaseur remained up with her aunt the whole dreary night. The brief visits of her young lover, the tender sympathy he showed, were as strengthening cordial to her heart.

Seizing the time when he was not nigh (I did not wish him to know the errand I was on, lest he should offer his services to help nurse the wounded soldier up stairs), I touched Philip on the shoulder, and inquired where the Yankee prisoners were kept. He told me in the negroes' church. I then asked if Miss Gordon were found.

He shook his head in the negative, fixing his eyes on me in a way that made my heart sink.

It was a look of cold scrutiny, underlaid by a stratum of sharp suspicion. Had he any clue, any cause, to connect any action of mine with his mistress' disappearance?

Of all the negroes about Red Leaf, Philip was the most distant and reserved in his behaviour to me. He had the peculiar, the indescribable, power of making me feel uncomfortable in his presence. He was a half-breed, and seemed devoted to his mistress. There was nothing that I could complain of; he never failed in his dignified politeness, but there was a something in his eyes which indicated feelings his words and actions did not betray.

By this time the violence of the storm was spent; the rain still fell, but not in sheets or torrents. Taking an umbrella from the rack, I went to the negro church in search of the preacher. The rebels were on guard, and the prisoners asleep on the floor. I stated my

errand. The rebel guard readily agreed to let the preacher go and see the wounded boy. Several men were waked, but proved not to be preachers. At length a man lying wrapped in his cloak, in a corner to himself, was roughly shaken and asked if he was a parson. Having answered in the affirmative, he was told to get up and go to work.

"What do you want me to do?" inquired the preacher, sitting up and staring around as if bewildered.

"Get up and go and pray for one of your fellows," answered the rebel roughly.

"The young man," I said, "so badly wounded wants to see you."

"The little chap that fought so well?" questioned the rebel guard.

"I hope he aint agoing to peg out," said another.

"It looks that way when a fellow wants a preacher," remarked a third.

"Preachers aint much in *my* line," said one of

the Rebel guard, "but ef women an' children want 'em, I haint no objection."

The preacher got up, stretched, and shook the dust from his cloak, combed his hair with a pocket comb, and then announced himself ready to go with me. He walked by my side under the umbrella. I took him into the house by a side door, and up the back stairs, to avoid meeting Mr. Reese, who yet kept watch over the house.

Leaving the preacher at the door, I went up to Emily's bed, and told her he was come and would talk or pray with her if she was ready.

"Give me a minute to think,—Give me another whiff of that chloroform, so I *can* think—pain kills thought," she urged, in a whisper.

I put the napkin to her mouth, it gave her a moment's release from keen suffering.

"Is he *here*—in *this* room?" she eagerly asked.

"Yes; by the door, waiting to speak to you."

"Go and lock the door and bring me the key," she commanded, still whispering.

Seeing something of astonishment in my face at so strange an order, she added—"I'm not crazy; I know perfectly well what I am about. Don't you see, if the door can be opened, we may be interrupted. Who likes to be interrupted when at prayers?"

I did as she said; locked the door and put the key in her eager hand; she clutched it tight and hid hand and key under the cover.

"Now," she said, in a firm tone, "let the preacher come. I am ready for his prayers."

Her pallid face was turned to the wall, the cover was pulled up around her head, she lay quite still. The preacher stood near the mantel-piece; had gone there to get a match—smoking a cigar. There was nothing remarkable in his appearance. He was an ordinary looking man, who evidently led an easy comfortable life, eating, drinking, of the best, satisfied with himself and the world. Taking the cigar from his mouth, holding it between his thumb and finger, he went up to the bed.

"You want to see me, my man?" he added. Getting no response, he said he would pray if the man would follow in his thoughts, and urged him to lift his thoughts to God.

As she had suddenly revealed herself to me, she revealed herself to him. She raised herself up in bed and looked in his sleek, contented, well fed face.

Her face was white as the faces of the dead; her eyes looked out from their hollow caverns; her short brown hair thrown back like a boy's displayed its delicacy of facial contour now that the flesh had disappeared; her features were clear and sharply cut, and white as marble. The two looked at each other.

Bloodless and white as was her face, careless, contented, sleek, and well fed as was his, at the moment his eyes fell on her, *his* face blanched and blanched until it rivalled hers in death-like pallor.

"Yes," she said, slowly, and in a hollow voice; "yes, pray for my soul, *Mr. Jermyn.*"

The preacher staggered back as if struck. Still further confused by this new complication of trouble, alarmed at the expression in my sister's countenance, at the fire and flame in her deep sunk eyes, I went to her bedside, in a vain attempt to soothe and quiet her.

She motioned me away with an imperious gesture of her left hand, still clutching the key.

The preacher cowered before her.

"Come, sir!" she sternly ordered; "preacher, perjurer, slanderer, pray for my soul."

The preacher made an effort to recover himself; he turned to me, shaking and white, and a sickly effort at smiling on his lips.

"Do you not see," he whispered, "this poor fellow is delirious? He needs a doctor, not a parson."

Low as he had spoken, Emily's keen ears caught his words. With a fierce look of triumph in her eyes she watched the preacher as he went to the door to escape. I now understood why she wanted the key. She laughed scornfully at

his futile effort to open the door. She sat bolt up right in the bed.

"You are a chaplain in the Union army—the Government pays you to pray for its soldiers"—she said, gazing with a hard, aggressive look on the preacher. "*I* am a soldier of the Union, wounded in its defence. Here is your subject! [striking her breast.] *I* am sodden in sin; *I* am steeped to the lips in vice; I am corrupt through and through; I am bound for everlasting torment; pull me up if you can. *You* pulled me down; now pull me up, if only one inch out of the sink of iniquity into which you plunged me."

This passionate outburst had a strange effect on the preacher; though more than half sarcasm, he seemed to receive it as an earnest adjuration for spiritual aid. He fell on his knees; his aspect and manner showed his sincerity; he lifted up his voice in prayer; he prayed that the hearts of all sinners might be turned to repentance; he said the blackest crimes could be washed white as snow in the blood of the Lamb, that although

the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint, though from the sole of the foot even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in us, naught but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, which have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment; yet the blood of the Lamb could make us whole; could heal the wounds and make sound and well the putrifying sores; he said, "Repentance was the way to salvation—"

"Enough!" said Emily, bringing the exercise to a sudden close—"Enough! It is the same old prayer you prayed in the days when I believed in prayers and—*you*." As she spoke she slipped from the bed and stood on her feet. In her soldier attire she looked like a boy of fifteen or sixteen. The breast of the blue blouse shirt she wore was saturated with blood, the towels that bound her shattered arm were crimson and dripping with the ensanguined flow; but her face was as white as the face of the dead. She stood over the preacher, yet on his knees, and

looked at him in a way that made him shrink; could he have sunk through the floor, or fled by the door, he would have done it—anything, anywhere, to escape the gaze of those fixed and ghastly eyes.

"Your prayer, Mr. Jermym," she said, "is as—false—as your own heart. Repentance is not—the—way to—salvation—for—*outcast* women, else we would—all—be saved. The outcast's life is one—long anguish of repentance; yet *we* are—lost, and *you* who make us what we are—save yourselves by—the—blood of the Lamb."

She spoke in gasps, and looked so like fainting, that I again went to her side to offer support. She waived me away with the same imperative impatience; she would brook no interference; she placed her hand on a chair back, which steadied her somewhat.

"Thus it ever is," she said, more quietly than she had hitherto spoken. She was looking down on the cowering figure of the man on his knees. "Thus it ever is in this unequal world; women

sin and suffer, men sin and prosper. Repentance may bring salvation for male, but not for female sinners. No Christ has died for—for—*outcast* women."

As she spake, still clinging to the chair, she slowly sank down to the floor. I rushed to her side. She looked at me and smiled, the same old smile I had known in our childhood's days. I could not lift her to the bed; I would not ask the man's assistance; I let her lie on the floor, and put a pillow under her head. She smiled on me again, the old, sweet, tender smile. It was inexpressibly pathetic; it stirred in my heart a thousand memories. I clasped her to my heart, I wept, I begged her not to abandon me to this desolate world, to live for my sake.

"Poor Hester!" she whispered, with infinite pity in her voice and eyes. "It is—better—thus. My life—is—worthless,—let it—go for the Union—the *Union*—the—*U*—"

She never finished the word; her lips faintly moved, but no sound came from them. A slight

quiver passed over her frame, a few gasps for the breath that never came, and all was over. Her spirit had fled—ah! whither?

We laid her body on the bed. A great pool of blood was on the floor; the ligature that had stayed its flow was removed; what hand but hers had done it? We straightened her slender limbs, and folded her hands over her breast. We loosened the key from her clutching fingers, and put it back in the door. We drew the curtains from the window, and let in the cold, grey light of the dawning day. And HE assisted me in these last offices for the dead. Without a word, in utter silence, he went about on tiptoe, as if afraid of awaking the white-faced sleeper on the bed, doing this and that little thing to remedy the disordered appearance of the chamber. With towels and water he washed up the pool of blood on the floor; he put out the lamp, and swept the hearth. The door was open; he was now free to go. Why did he linger?

As for myself, I sat by the window, dull and

benumbed in feeling, looking out on the court-yard below. The Rebel soldiers were up, going over the yard, taking food to their horses. One or two of the scouts, who had been out all night looking for the lost one, rode up on jaded animals, and told of their bootless work. The preacher still lingered,—Why? The imperious voice that bade him stay—that bade him kneel and pray for the woman he had lured to ruin—was now silenced for ever,—What hindered his going? I was in no mood to speak, and uttered no word to him. He hovered around, wishing to say something. I gave him no encouragement. His sleek, well fed air of prosperity was irritating to my feelings. I could not but remember that *he* had been more guilty than she, and that she had suffered misery and ruin for her sins, while *he* had fattened and prospered in his iniquity, and grown in wealth and honours. I bitterly asked myself "Where is the justice of Heaven? Where that overruling Providence that ordereth all things well?"

Presently he stood before me in silence. I neither looked at him nor spoke.

"What will you do?" he at length asked.

"Does it concern *you* what I do?"

"About *her?* Will you dress her as a—man, or a—woman?"

"She shall be buried as she is," I answered. "I cannot see how it concerns *you* to know."

"It will—be better," he said, deferentially, "to bury her—as she is—as a—soldier."

"So be it. She died a soldier; let her rest as one."

"It is better so," he said, drawing a sigh of relief. "If it got out that she was a—woman, her story—might be—ripped up—unpleasant for the family!"

"And for the minister who caused her ruin!" I said, looking into his well fed face.

"She could not prove the charge when living," he replied, with confidence; "it is not likely it could be substantiated *now*."

Thus it is with the average man. No remorse

for secret sins. The petty world men live in is their only tribunal; to stand well before it is all they aim at.

Satisfied in his mind that no exposure would be made, the preacher went from the presence of the dead—a cigar in his mouth, honour and prosperity before him.

As *she* had said—

"Thus it ever is in this unequal world; the woman sins and suffers, the man sins and prospers."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I IS EKEL."

FROM my place at the window I heard the negroes and the Rebel men in the court below talking over Miss Gordon's mysterious disappearance. The Rebels loudly asserted that "the d——d Yanks" were at the bottom of the mischief. An old negro woman accepted the idea and said —"From de bery fust she knowed dem dar oudacious Yanks done stole Miss Gerty."

Philip, who was standing by, asked how it was possible the Yankees had stolen her when they had left the place at ten o'clock that morning? "If Yankees stole her," he added, after a pause, "some mean nigger must have helped 'em."

"Do you think, Philip," inquired Mr. Reese,

"that any of the Red Leaf negroes could commit such a crime?"

"If they was put up to it, sir, for money, they might do anything mean."

Now I well knew that Philip and Mammy Milly both had observed and commented on Captain Pym's admiration for Miss Gordon. I had counted on some one of the house negroes bringing up the fact, which might in this way become a nucleus around which suspicions would gather and revolve until the opinion obtained that she had voluntarily fled with the Federal officer.

Nothing of the kind occurred. The possibility of her voluntary flight was suggested by neither black nor white.

The miserable morning wore on. The sun rose on the desolate house—rose in all his grandeur and glory, filling the world with the splendour of his rays. Oh! the rather should he have hidden his face and mourned over the misery of earth.

Mrs. Devaseur was still very ill, and her niece remained in close attendance. A pall of gloom hung over the house, which no risen sun could lighten or lift.

Mr. Lynn Devaseur had ridden all night in every direction, at intervals returning in the vain hope that tidings had been received at the house.

As I sat by the window looking away from the spot where so silently lay the form once so full of life—away from the white face forever hushed in death, a strange feeling began to creep over me, a dreadful awe of what was in the room. I kept my eyes turned away and gazed on the scenes outside. I durst not look toward the bed, a fear filled me that its cold burden had risen and was watching me—watching with ghostly eyes. The longer I sat there the more vivid grew the idea that she was sitting up in bed gazing on me—it became unbearable—gazing with sad astonished eyes, as if, *since her short sojourn in the spirit world, she had learned of*

my secret sin, of my dark treachery, and had returned to taunt me with it.

I could endure this no longer. I stole from the room walking softly, not daring to look back. I *felt* that the spirit eyes of Emily were on me, and followed me as I stole away. I closed the door and went down stairs.

My haggard face too plainly proclaimed the suffering of my soul. Such suffering was attributed to sympathy with the family's distress. Mammy Milly spoke to me kindly; she urged me to rest, to sleep; she said there were enough to search for the lost without taxing my strength. Mr. Reese also advised me to rest. I told him the young soldier was dead, that the preacher and myself were with him to the last, that he was willing to die and this was all. He said he would attend to the burial. The attention, the kind words and looks of these people, affected me deeply—I was not stone. I shivered and shrank from the light of day. A haunting fear pursued me—the fear of exposure, the fear that

something, however slight, might lead to the detection of my guilt, and make me the mark for the scorn and contempt of my kind.

About ten o'clock the Rebels were ordered to retreat from Red Leaf. A report was rife that a superior Union force was approaching.

Unable to rest in or out of the house, I was walking on the high road as the Rebel men marched by. They carried with them the Union prisoners, disarmed, and dispirited. Mr. Jermyn, not being a soldier, was left at Red Leaf to bury the dead, and attend to the wounded Federal soldiers.

I withdrew from the road, and stood under a tree by the way side as the Confederate men went by. The last of that rebel band was Lynn Devaseur; and, oh God! oh God! I would have cast myself under his horse's feet and died there, could my immolation have made one atom less the mute anguish I saw in his face. As a tree, a post, or any senseless, soulless, object might meet his eye, without in the least degree dis-

turbing the dead sea of his soul, in which deep dead sea nothing lived or moved save thoughts of *her*,—so met *my* poor form his unconscious eyes. What to him was any object on earth, or under the sun, if *she* were not? For him, the whole wide universe had resolved itself into one element—*grief*. All beyond was but empty space.

And this was *my* work! Who can doubt that there is a hell in the world to come, since we often enter on its tortures here?

After the rebel men had passed out of sight, I felt free to pursue a purpose of my heart, which the fear of incurring suspicion had kept me from earlier acting out.

I took the path leading to the mound, and rapidly walked thitherward. I could no longer endure the suspense, and resolved to find out *her* fate. After a few minutes' walk, while yet in the road that skirted the great sugar cane field, I was startled by the report of a rifle immediately, as it seemed, behind me. Looking

around, I discovered the smoke of the gun a short distance off in the woods, and saw a negro man stoop to the ground over the object he had shot, and lift it on his shoulder. From the gigantic size of the negro, I took him to be one-eyed Sampson. He was walking off in another direction, with the load on his shoulder. I broke through the woods after him, calling him to stop. He did stop at the sound of my voice, turned, and looked at me, as if in doubt whether to approach or escape. As soon as he saw who I was, he slowly came up, a gun in one hand, in the other he held the yet quivering fore feet of the huge hog he had shot. The animal lay over his shoulder, the great head hung over the black's breast, its jaws gasping and dropping blood. The two made a savage picture, the giant negro with his brawny black arms naked to the shoulder, the huge beast with open jaws dropping blood. Hideous as the group was, I rushed to meet it.

"Where is she? What have you done with

your mistress?" I gasped, out of breath with running.

Slowly to the ground he let slip the dying animal, and turned on me his one eye, as taking time to consider what answer to give."

"You is de coloured folks' fren—*you* is?" he asked with exasperating deliberation. He had but recently learned to call his people "*coloured.*" Before slavery was ended the blacks were called *Negroes* by every Southern white. If the word "coloured" is better and preferable to "Negro," the credit is due to the negro's Northern friends, who made the change out of respect to the African race.

"You is de coloured folks' fren—*you* is?" he asked.

"Yes! yes!" I answered excitedly. "Where is she? What have you done with her? Speak fast."

I might as well have attempted to hurry an elephant. With his one reddened eye still on me he put another question. "We is ekel wid

white folks—*we* is?" and waited my answer. I stamped my foot in a frenzy of impatience. "My God," I cried, "What do you mean? Tell me at once where she is, and what you have done with her!"

Then from his one eye, with its dead black iris set in an inflamed and fiery cornea, a sluggish leer rolled at me, his thick lips shook in a sensual chuckle. Leaning down to me his spiky head, he whispered—"*I's got her.*"

"*You?*" burst from my horrified heart. Never before had the barbarous beastliness of this son of Africa so strongly shone out from his mind and body. I shrank back; his leer, his lips, excited a strong and unspeakable repulsion. Dimly perceiving something of the repellant power he emanated, he went on in apology, or justification of what he had done. "Niggers is ekel," he said, "to white folks *now*. *I's ekel—I's got her.*"

What fool, what beast was this, to argue thus. I had taught him the grand principle of human

equality before the law, and *this* was his construction of that principle! Were the slaveholders' right? Were these black children of Africa yet too undeveloped to accept the civilisation of the day? Do they stand where our ancestors stood when Druids were their highest teachers? These thoughts flashing through me, and seeing the uselessness of discussion, I controlled myself sufficiently to question further. I learned that he and preacher Jim had seized Miss Gordon soon after she had left the house, had carried her through the woods to the old mound cave; that Sampson had remained to hold guard over her while Jim went to inform the Captain of the success of the capture, and to learn what hour he wished her taken on board; that Jim returned with the information that the Captain was either dead or prisoner to the Secesh; that, concluding they could not realise money from their capture, they resolved to keep her for themselves. This I vehemently opposed, and used every argument to induce him to re-

lease her. He was stolidly immoveable. He said he "couldn't do dat, bekaze dem dar niggers at de Red Lif Gretus* would ketch him and Jim, and tar dem to pieces; dey jes would."

I answered, that he and Jim could escape to the city, and put themselves under the protection of the Union forces. He was stolidly immoveable, simply rehearsing his newly acquired idea, "*I's* ekel—*I's* got her." Despairing of doing anything with the giant, I left him, and hurried on to the mound to see Preacher Jim, having a faint hope that he would prove more amenable to reason.

One-eyed Sampson shouldered the hog and slowly followed me, keeping some distance behind, until he was hailed by a negro in the field. I hastened on leaving the two talking together across the rail fence.

Breathless with rapid walking, agitated and weak with anxiety, I reached the mound.

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* "Gretus" is the negro abbreviation of great house.

Preacher Jim was squatted on a stump near the mouth of the cave, but separated from it by the thick growth of cane and brambles which concealed the entrance from the casual observer. Jim evidently was on guard, he had a gun in his hand, and his small viperish eyes turned hither and thither sharply on the look out. The rustle of a leaf startled him; the twitter of a bird in the bough made him prick his ears like an animal alarmed.

At the first glimpse of me he raised his gun and cocked it; recognising me as a friend to the blacks he lowered it with a cunning wink.

I assumed an air of command; I used no arguments with this negro; I ordered him to go at once and release Miss Gordon; I told him Captain Pym was neither among the dead or the prisoners, that I had no doubt of his escape, and no doubt but in a short time he would return to punish misdoers, that his vengeance would fall on him if any wrong were done to the lady of his choice.

Jim said he agreed with me "zactly bout Capen Pym;" he felt "shure Capen Pym warn't no sich fool as to go en git *his* sef killed wid rebl bullets—no! he tell'd Big Sam dat same ting; *he* did 'en hab no 'ticlar use for de gal, caze *he* wanted de money; what de Capen was guine to gib 'em for ketchin de gal, and he tell'd Big Sam de best plan was to get hole ob a skiff or a kennue and put de gal inter de kennue, and tek her to de city, and gib her to de Capen dar in de city, ef so be de Capen was dar; but Big Sam, he say, he warn't a guine ter do no sich, caze he am guine ter keep de gal his sef. We's ekel now. Big Sam, he say, de Unioners is a guine ter make all de black men tek de white gals, en de white men tek de black gals, and dats jis de case."

Great heaven! was it for beings like *these* our Government was spending billions of money, and brave men pouring out their blood like water? Could spirit or will act *without* the body, mine would have seized that black thing and dashed

his head against a tree, so much did his puerile twaddle enrage me.

At this instant another actor appeared on the scene. From the forest, without a second's warning, swift as a shooting star, his face white with an awful whiteness, came the Master of Red Leaf. Leaping on the fear-struck black, he seized him by the throat. With a voice so stern and intense with suppressed passion, it seemed to hold in its sound the whole sum of human wrath, he said, "*Where is she, viper?*"

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF THE SLAVE-MASTER.

BEFORE proceeding with my story, which does not deal in clap-trap, but is only a plain straight narrative of consecutive events as they occurred under my own eye, I will pause a moment to explain the unexpected presence of one I had thought marching away from the place with his Confederate companions. The facts I shall give in explanation I learned from Captain Pym long after all was over.

Doubtless it was with a lingering hope of hearing something of the loved and lost, before finally leaving the neighbourhood, that Lynn Devaseur, soon after he had passed me as I stood by the wayside, looking at his stricken face, turned off from the high road, leaving his

rebel men, and galloped toward the old church with its many-coloured glass windows, and its tall tower surmounted by a cross. *She* had loved the church, its rites and ceremonies, its music—her own voice mingling with the choir, and making its sweetest sounds.

The old negro who acted as sexton observed the Master walk once or twice up and down the silent aisles, then slowly up the stairway, and stand for a moment before the organ,—*Her* fingers had so often struck music from its keys. In the same silent way he went out and walked among the graves, and stood a short while beside his father's tomb. It was a wordless, a tearless farewell—but who shall know its sadness?

When it was over, the Master again mounted his horse and galloped away, taking a short cut through the woods, to join his command.

It was in this short cut through the pathless woods that his glance fell on the form of a man, skulking from tree to tree—*a man in blue.* A blaze of light was flashed on his mind.

To leap from his horse, to seize the man, to transfix him with the fierceness of his eye, was the work of an instant.

Shaking and quaking, thinking his last minute was come, Captain Pym begged for his life, promising to *reveal all* if allowed to live.

What to the Master was the life or death of a creature like *that*, compared to one word of *her?* The life was promised, and Pym confessed the conspiracy—never mentioning me, as he asserted on his honour. Pym did not know the exact locality of the mound, and was endeavouring to make his way to it, believing, as he told the Master, that Miss Gordon would be found there, safe and unharmed.

The instant this information was gained, the Master dashed the limp captain to the ground, mounted his horse, and galloped away. Soon after this, Pym fell in with One-eyed Sampson, with the dead hog on his shoulder, on his way to his own cabin, where he purposed dressing it for a feast. These two consulted over the situation

of affairs, and came to an understanding that the best way out of the difficulty they were in would be to waylay and kill the Master before he rejoined his rebel band. They agreed, and probably with truth, that no promise would hold Lynn Devaseur from wreaking a terrible vengeance on the whites as well as blacks concerned in the outrage perpetrated on the lady of Red Leaf.

Thus it happened that the Master, whom I thought marching off in another direction with his band of traitors, so suddenly swept down, like a pale vengeance, on the negro keeping guard at the mound's mouth.

"*Where is she, viper?*" he demanded, his firm grip on the throat of the writhing little black.

Before the preacher, paralyzed with fear, could stutter out a word in response, from within came a cry—an anguished call. It was *her* voice; she had heard *his.*

Still holding the black's throat in his vice-like grip, Lynn Devaseur lifted his head as if to divine the direction of the call. It came again.

Could he fail to follow it? His heart pointed the way. He broke to it; through the cane, through the brambles and bush, he tore his way, dragging the negro along.

How like a writhing black serpent he looked —his red and pointed tongue protruding from his lips, black and foam-flecked by the effort he made to speak. Fear turned his speech to an inarticulate stutter.

I closely followed, entering the place so familiar to me as a secret or "underground" schoolhouse, according to the slang of the day.

Coming, as we did, from the full blaze of the sun, for a space of time all was darkness within the tomb—darkness and deep silence—no sound of the voice the Master so longed to hear. He called her name; only the echo returned it. With such tones of tenderness and love and anxiety as no other voice could command, the Master called her again and again. Only the echoes answered him. At first we stood still in solemn darkness, not an object visible. Now,

slowly from the darkness and the gloom the objects around began to emerge and stand before our eyes.

The roof of the vault, the cracked walls, the dirt dug up in hillocks, the little pile of ancient human bones, the grinning skulls and the toothless skulls, the small earthen pots used ages and ages ago by a people long passed from earth, the rude benches and ruder table which Preacher Jim had contrived for use during school time,—all these presented themselves to our vision as our eyes grew accustomed to the dim light of the place.

Nor were these all the objects we saw. In the furthest shadow, away from the grinning skulls and heap of grey bones and small earthen pots, on a bed of dry leaves and moss, lay a slender human form.

It lay as still, as motionless, as if in death's embrace. But it was not in death's embrace. The face was as white as the dead's, the starlit eyes were closed. The delicate hands were fast

bound with cords, the feet were fastened to a wooden post planted deep in the ground. As I looked upon her, so motionless, so white, I thought the spirit was fled—that it had gone out in that last anguished cry which called her beloved to her side.

An awful change swept over that lover's face: the wrath of a god was in it.

He lifted high the writhing serpent in his grasp, and dashed it to the earth with such force that it lay there as motionless as though the breath were for ever knocked out of its body.

Kneeling by her side, the Master cut the cords that bound her hands and feet, and gathered her to his breast, as a mother would gather her lost child. With a speechless pity, with a love unutterable he laid his lips on her brow, on her closed lids, on the marks made by the cruel cords on her delicate wrists.

Such love as looked from his eyes, as lived in the breath of his lips, were enough to have waked her to life had she lain in her shroud.

She looked up, and smiled in his face, and a great joy illumined his heart, it shone like a glory from his aspect and his eyes.

But a black and horrible suspicion swept away the glory, a dark shadow took its place, he gazed on her pale face intently, *questioningly.* Their eyes met. *She* divined the suspicion that had stung him like the bite of an adder—suspicion of outrage too dreadful for words. A shudder passed over his frame—and the saddest pity for *him*—for the grief *he* felt that *she* had suffered, was in her mournful eyes. The lids closed over their pity and their love, and two large drops slid out and over her cheeks; then she laid her head again on his breast; her lips quivered as he kissed away the drops, and strained her to his breast.

Not a word was uttered, but he understood all—*all*—*all.* Through the hand he spread over his face to hide its bitterness of grief, fell tears wrung out by such keen suffering as few mortals are called on to know.

A noise so slight that no other ear than her's, made abnormally acute by the dreadful experience of the last few hours, would have given it heed, startled her repose. She lifted her head from his breast and listened, as a wounded deer might listen to the sounds of the cruel huntsman's horn, or the coming of his murderous feet.

Following the direction of her affrighted eyes, I caught one glimpse of a rifle's muzzle in the hand of the huge black whom I had so recently seen with the slain swine swung over his brawny shoulders. One glimpse, a loud report, and a piercing shriek, and for a moment I stood stunned, seeing nothing, knowing nothing. Smoke, and the smell of powder, filled the vault.

When the smoke cleared away, and objects were again visible, the foremost of all was the negro, one-eyed Sampson, yet holding his gun. At his black bare feet lay the lovers face to face, breast to breast, heart to heart.

From between those two hearts, which in life

had beat as one, flowed a small stream of warm red blood, so warm with life that a slight steam rose from it.

Whether it were hers, or his, or both, I never knew. One ball had sent both souls to their God. Never did whiter souls stand before the Judgment-seat.

I was numbed and dazed like one in a troubled dream, with an undefined feeling that I would wake up and find it only a dream. Save that a great weakness smote my knees, so that I sank down on one of the rude benches, I was not else affected by the strangely tragic scene. I sat on the bench as silent and seemingly as soulless as the skull that lay by my side.

I saw before me the beautiful dead, the noble, the loving dead, and the gigantic negro with the gun in his hand. Behind the negro was the whiter yet blacker villain, Captain Martyr Pym. He craned his head around the black, and asked if the "d——d traitor was dead?"

The negro said he was "deader than a door

nail." Then Pym came forward and spurned with his foot the body of the lifeless rebel man, and said the rebel woman "deserved her fate for clinging to a d——d traitor."

Until this moment Preacher Jim had lain in the semblance of death. He now half opened one eye, and peeped slyly out, to see how matters were. Apparently satisfied with the situation, both of his small snaky eyes flew open, and he sprung up, snapped his heels together, and danced a jig around the dead that lay there.

Captain Pym asked what was to be done with these dead rebels?

"Kiver 'em outen sight," answered Sampson, and he brought from a far corner of the cavern a spade and a shovel, and stuck the spade into the earthen floor, and gave the shovel to Jim, and the two blacks dug up great clods of clay and heaved them out of the pit, and great drops of sweat broke out on the giant's black face and breast, which he kept bare winter and summer.

When the pit was dug deep enough, the two

negroes lifted the lovers, yet clinging in a last embrace, and laid them in the grave they had made.

As they were lifted one of her arms, which was around her lover's neck, loosened and fell therefrom, and the white hand trailed in the dust. On the finger of the white hand trailing in the dust a jewel gleamed. It was large and luminous; *I* knew who had put the ring on the finger; *I* knew she had valued that ring, not for splendour of light it emitted, but for the sake of the lover who gave it.

Captain Pym's eyes glinted with greed as they caught sight of the shining stone. Lifting the lifeless hand, he slipped the ring from its finger, wiped it on his coat sleeve, and "guessed it would fetch a cool thousand." On second thought he said he was mistaken, the thing was paste, not worth a stiver, and wondered why rich people would wear sham jewels; then, with an absent air, he put the ring in his pocket.

The two lovers lay in the grave the negroes had dug, together they lay, face to face, breast to

breast, heart to heart, and the great clods of clay fell on them.

When they were hidden from sight and sound, and a hillock of earth lay over them, Captain Pym ordered the negroes to set a board at their head and another at their feet. "Bury them decently," he said, "though *they* are traitors *we* must be Christians."

So the earth was smoothed above the traitors' bed, and a board was set up at their head, and another at their feet, as the Captain commanded.

After all was done the Captain turned to me with a solemn demeanour.

"Miss Stanhope," he said, with a serious air, "this is a sad business, very, but you must see *I* am not to blame. You know *I* did everything in my power to save this woman—she was a splendid girl—from the ill luck of that rascal reb. Had she listened to *me*, she would now be alive, rich, and respected by every loyal man and woman. As people make their beds, so must they lie. *My* conscience is clear."

He seemed to be in earnest, and to possess real satisfaction in himself. How was this? Why should *I* feel such keen and bitter self-reproach? Why should *my* conscience never for one moment cease to sting me, and whip me as with scorpion lashes, and this man, as criminal as myself, congratulate himself on his proper and virtuous conduct? Does one human conscience so differ from another? Is there no absolute standard, that we may determine which, and how far one is right and the other wrong?

We went forth from that ancient tomb, we four, the two negroes and the two whites; we left that dim sepulchral place, where lay the young and the lovely of to-day, with the bones of a people the world knows nothing of; we went forth into the bright light of the life-giving sun. Alas! never again would light be light to me; forever more to me would the earth be enshadowed and the skies ashen, and all nature as grey and sombre and full of tragedy as that ancient vault under the ancient mound.

CHAPTER X.

RED LEAF'S DESOLATION.

CAPTAIN PYM did not return with me to Red Leaf. He had no desire to meet ex-Lieutenant Reese, whom he denounced as a copperhead Democrat, and Secesh sympathiser. He said he would watch for a boat, and return to New Orleans as soon as possible; that he was sure General Butler would give him a "company of men to return to this d——d Secesh place and punish the traitors" who had burned his boat and captured his men. "It was a matter of great pride and satisfaction," he added, "that he could report to his General the certain death of the rebel leader, Devaseur; and he'd never rest until the last d——d rascal was sent to share his Colonel's fate.

After enjoining silence on the negroes, as well as on me, Captain Pym bade us farewell, and turned off towards the river.

On re-entering the house, I found nothing changed—Mrs. Devaseur still very ill, her niece in attendance, the ex-Lieutenant walking about the porticos, giving assistance or advice to Philip as to the management of affairs, whenever that grave and dignified servitor called upon him. In the absence of the Master, and the illness of the mistress, Philip recognised the interest and authority of the man to whom his young mistress was betrothed.

The rebels had left the wounded Union soldiers, as well as their own, to be cared for. The Union surgeon and Mr. Jermyn were left to give their attentions where needed.

Mr. Reese informed me that the boy-soldier whom I had attended during the night would be buried at four o'clock in the churchyard, and that Mr. Jermyn had gone to bed, feeling too unwell to perform the burial ceremony. I

begged him to read the burial service over the grave.

Buried as a boy, the secret of her sex was buried with her. She was laid away in the Union uniform in which she died—a blue blouse-jacket and blue pantaloons. A peaceful smile was on her face. I thanked heaven the fever of her life was over.

As her friends had foreseen, Mrs. Devaseur sank under the weight of the woeful times. Three days after the death of the son in whom she had seen no flaw—the son she had pronounced perfect from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, spotless from the core of his heart out to the furthest parts of his being—she followed him. Her spirit sought his in that world where high and lofty spirits find a fitter home than earth can give; and another grave was made in the churchyard, to receive the body of the mistress of Red Leaf.

Father Martyn, the Catholic priest, performed the service. A large concourse of negroes was

gathered around the grave. Not only every Devaseur slave, old and young, even the small children, but numbers from the neighbouring plantations, attended the burial. Conspicuous among them was the black giant, One-eyed Sampson, with his spikey head and bare black arms. There were few whites; many of the white families had left the country, alarmed by continual rumours of Union raids.

The tears of the negroes flowed unrestrained; some wept aloud. What a sight! and how mysterious the workings of the human heart! *Slaves* weeping over the grave of one who had held them in bondage!

The grief of the two children was pitiable and pathetic; it touched the tenderest sensibilities of those emotional blacks. Edgar, the boy, threw himself on the coffin containing the form he had loved so well, and clung to it with such passionate force that it required the effort of two weeping slaves to tear him away. He said they should not bury his mother—she was *his, his own;* he

would take her back to her room, and stay with her night and day.

After the coffin was lowered, and the dull clods of clay began to cover it, the boy broke from the black who held his hand, and threw himself into the grave, frantically trying to cast out the clods that covered his mother.

The sight of this uncontrollable grief so overcame the negroes that many of them burst out in loud lamentations. Mr. Reese had charge of the little girl, who was of a less intense nature, and wept in silence.

Miss Clara Devaseur had been unable to follow the funeral cortege. Her condition gave great alarm to her intended husband. The mystery of her cousin's disappearance, the thousand conjectures and harrowing apprehensions, had so seriously shocked her nervous system, it seemed her reason, if not her life, was threatened.

On returning from the burial of Mrs. Devaseur, we found her niece, not in her room quietly resting, as the Lieutenant had hoped, but rapidly

pacing the portico floor, her long fair hair loosed and flowing in disorder, and in her eyes a most anguished anxiety. Philip stood by in respectful and deep commiseration. Mammy Milly, who had been left to attend her, was weeping in sympathy.

"She *will* do it," said Milly, in answer to a look from the Lieutenant, which Milly construed into a remonstrance for not having better guarded her young mistress; "she will go on like that, sir—we can't stop her; she won't be soothed; she won't listen to nothing we say, and the truth is, we hav'nt nothin to say as is calculated to soothe my poor dear. We's all of us jes broken-hearted. What with missis agoin off, and poor dear Miss Gertrude—" tears stopped her utterance.

Rosa, who was looking on, lifted up her voice and wept aloud.

The young ex-Lieutenant circled the waist of his betrothed with his arm, and holding her there a moment announced to the servants and

to me, that in order that he might watch over her every hour and moment of her life until her health of mind and body was restored, with her consent, he would have their marriage take place at once—that very evening; he could not, he would not, leave her to her melancholy fancies another night. She needed him to soothe and sustain her under her present overwhelming afflictions. Father Martyn had been consulted and approved.

He desired Milly and Rosa to put up their young lady's things and the children's, as he would take them away by the first boat going up the river. A change of scene, absence from a home so desolate, was the first step toward restoring that calmness so necessary to health of mind and body.

Miss Devaseur heard him in a moment of grief, but taking in the idea that she was to leave Red Leaf, she broke from the tender embrace that held her, and again wildly walked the portico floor.

"Oh!" she cried, "I cannot go; I never can go until I hear from my Constance! I could bear to hear she is dead—I can bear anything but this awful mystery—this dreadful uncertainty! What if some hideous demon has possession of my darling, my beautiful, my high and perfect one? It is this thought that will kill me! kill me! kill me!"

Young Reese used every effort to calm and assuage her anxiety. He asserted that he himself was convinced that she was dead, he could not otherwise account for her absence. If any villain held her by force, where could he hide her? Surely not in this neighbourhood; the news of her disappearance had been spread far and wide, large rewards were offered for information, if she were any where alive, some one, some negro eager for the reward would bring the news. She could not have been carried away by water, as no boat had passed on that evening of her disappearance.

Miss Devaseur detected the weak points of

this argument. She asked how did they know but some cruel men—cruel Union soldiers—had seized her, put her in a skiff, and taken her away; they might have had small boats attached to the steamer that was burned. She again broke away, and walked up and down the floor, wringing her hands in a piteous and helpless grief.

"Oh God!" she exclaimed passionately, "*where* is my dear one? Shall I never know? Will this awful mystery never be lifted? Oh! could I but know she were safe in her grave beside the one we laid there to-day, I could bear it. Death is nothing; death is peace; death would take my darling to Heaven. There is no war in Heaven —no cruel, cruel war."

These broken words of grief and woe determined me to make known to her lover the fact that the Master and the lady of Red Leaf lay in a grave dug by their murderers in the vault under the old mound. This I could do without betraying the evil-doers. I would make it appear

that Union soldiers straggling from the boat had kidnapped Miss Gordon and kept her imprisoned in the mound during the night, doubtless in the hope of reward, that the Master in some way learned the fact as he was riding away with his men, that *I* had followed the Master into the mound where he and she were shot by the soldiers and buried there.

Enough of this strange story was told to Miss Devaseur to set her mind at rest, to dispel the fears she had of outrages to her cousin worse than death. The tragical fate of the Master was not made known until long after, when his cousin was more able to bear the blow.

The marriage was performed in the presence of the house servants and some of the field negroes. Mr. Reese deferred his departure from Red Leaf until the lovers were removed from their strange companionship with the relics of a by-gone age and an extinct people, and placed in the churchyard by the side of the mother they had loved so well. On the evening of that

morning a boat passed going up the river, and the bridegroom and bride, the two children, and two servants, Rosa and Milly, were taken on board, and the Red Leaf house and plantation were left under the charge of Philip. I was asked to remain with the children, at least for the present, as their governess, but declined on the ground that I needed rest of mind and body. I determined to go back to New Orleans and seek some avocation, some employment, that might make me forget. I could *not* forget; forever, asleep or awake, before my mental vision, was going on the dreadful tragedy I had witnessed—*I* had helped to make; and forever, asleep or awake, the wan faces of the beautiful dead were before my eyes, and *their* eyes were fixed on mine with sad reproachful gaze.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEGRO JUDGE.

My things were packed, and I waited for a boat going down the river. Wandering over the desolate house like a perturbed spirit, I went for the last time into the library where still hung the two lovely portraits of the cousins, and the deep eyes of the one still gazed on the single star seen in a cloudy sky, and the other cousin still seemed to radiate light and loveliness around her; and the memory of the kneeling scene—that time the slant sun-set rays lay over and lumined the Master as his soul went forth in a worshipping look to the portrait of the lady he loved —that scene seemed to have retreated far back into the ages past, for only the evil deeds of more recent time now filled my mind and memory.

Philip appeared at the door, looked in, and asked might he say a word. His word was a request that I would step into his office a minute. The room he called by that name was situated on the ground floor, near the dining-room, and opened into the pantry.

With a grave and severe air, the negro led the way, and opened his office door. I was somewhat startled to find already there the two negroes, One-eyed Sampson and Preacher Jim. What did this portend? Had these negroes broken faith and confessed their deeds?

Philip handed me a chair, the two negroes remained standing. Philip placed himself so that he faced his three visitors, or prisoners, I began to think. I tried to brace myself to endure exposure, and the consequent scorn of my kind, which I felt was coming. I said to myself—"You are at the worst, no new suffering can add to your misery."

"When you first came amongst us," Philip began, looking at me, "I 'deavered, as likewise

did Milly and the rest of the Devaseur folks, to show my respict to you as a lady come to teach our chillons, jest as we showed our respicts to the Professor who come from the North down here for to teach Mas Lynn. The Professor man was a gentleman what all of us paid great respict to, and though he lived wid us five years and better, not a one of us even see cause to change our opinion. No mum!"

He paused a moment as if considering how best to say what he had on his mind to say. Then he went on, still looking straight at me.

"This family, mum, aint what it were when you first came down from your nor'ern country to live mongst us. No, mum; at dat time we was well, and a doin' well; the Devaseur family was, black and white. The real and shure 'nuff Devaseur black folks, which I mean sich as have growd up wid der white folks, and was born in de Devaseur family, long time back, is mostly sich as can be trusted. Yes, mum, de most of us is of dat trusty sort, but 'pears like dere is been

some amongst us as nobody can put any dependance in, none whatsomever. I 'members de time, 'taint so far back, when Mas Lynn's father fotch home Sam here; he was a right smart sized boy den, an Master bought him in the city; likewise Mr. Pickard dat same time fotched home Jim; dey was both sold on account of misbehaviour; dey belonged to a widee lady, and sech capers as dey cut nigh 'bout run der mistress plain distracted. You, mum, bein' a nor'ern lady, mighten understan our ways down here, but you may jes set it down, when niggers is sent from home and sold, it's on 'count of misbehaviour; grand white folks aint aguine tu sell der people if dey can help durselves, becase dere is a sorter feeling atwix 'em as makes it hard to part. So you see, mum, dere two niggers before you aint of de true Devaseur stock what has been in our family for a hundred year. No, mum, an when dey goes about pretendin' they wants book larnin', it aint for no good. An *you*, mum, not bein' 'quainted wid our people, may

not understand dere curus ways. Master never fotched Sam home becase he had any need for him, which he dident, but he and Mr. Pickard said as how they wanted to try 'speriments on dem bad boys—wanted to see how far dey could be mended into good and decent sort of niggers, willin' to earn dere livin' by honest work."

What did all this mean, and what power had this one man thus to assume superiority over these two—to hold them in subdued silence during his arraignment?

"There is them," he went on quite composedly, looking at the two subdued and silent blacks before him, with a quiet air of superiority, "as is of opinion that Preachin Jim, though he *is* a preacher, and One-eyed Sampson, though likewise he is a professor of religion, there is them among us as believes they is the wusted men you can find far or near. We don't put no trust in 'em whatsomever. Now, mum, de fact is, it's a gitten to be the 'pinion of us folks that these two is at the bottom of that bad work done in

de moun'. We hev been out dere, and hev taken most pertic'lar keer to notice all around, and we hev found signs, mum, as pints straight to dose two."

He drew from his pocket a parcel wrapped in an old newspaper, unfolded it, and displayed some articles familiar to my sight—how it sickened me to see them! An old spelling book, a piece of a slate, a soiled sheet of foolscap paper folded and used as a copy book. Jim's name was in the latter—written by myself—*James Pickard*, and underneath were many rude attempts at copying the name by Jim.

"You see, mum," said Philip, "sich niggers as Jim aint no sort o' use for book larnin', becase they makes no good use of nothing. That school hus, mum, was a bad place, and them two scholars was worse nor the place. Here," he added, taking another parcel from another pocket—"Here, mum, is proof as One-eyed Sam was likewise a scholar in that bad school hus."

He produced Sam's soiled and wretched copy-

book with his name in full, Samuel Devaseur, written by my hand, and Sam's rude and abortive efforts at imitation. The two negroes stood like culprits caught in crime. How did this one man so control and cow them?

"Now, mum," said Philip, slowly, as was his way, but with an air of severe judicial dignity, "that Fedril Captain, that you must a noticed when he was a visitor in this house, and behaved himself in a most low bred style to the ladies of Red Leaf, as showed quite plain what sort of rairin he had had where he come from; well, mum, this same Fedril Captain who did not know how to conduct himself properly to the young ladies, mum—not by no means—*he* was seen a coming from that moun that very same morning our Mas Lynn and Miss Gertrude was murdered —coming in company with *three* persons—two of them persons was black and the other was white."

A long pause ensued, and the two culprits looked more cast down and cowed than before.

"I'm well aweer, mum," he resumed, in the same steady way, "as there is no law nor order *now*, since there is nobody but soldiers as regulates things, and I don't intend for to make no fuss, but what I means is this, these two scholars o' yourn had better go long wid you on the same boat, for there aint the least doubt in my mind that if the Devaseur folks was to get hold of this yer business they'd use these two forein niggers roughly—they would *that*. Jim knows, and Sam knows, ef I was to make known my 'spicions they'd be tore to pieces—they would *that*. That's all, mum. They is your scholars mum, an ef you wants to save their lives, take 'em with you."

"Do—do—don't tell on us," said the preacher, in great fear; "do—do—*don't* let 'em get at us—we'll go on de—de—de fust boat."

"Yes; we'll go long wid de white ooman," said the One-eyed. "We is ekel now—we's all ekel."

"You'd better keep close in here till the boat

comes," said Philip, "for ef you go out mongst our folks I won't be 'sponsible for konsekenses—that's all."

And it was all. But oh! was it not enough? Was it not a deep and bitter humiliation thus to be placed—thus classed with these two, more hateful in my sight than poisonous adders, more loathsome than spotted toad?

Philip went away, closing the door after him. Some moments elapsed before I gathered strength to rise and go from companionship so painful. *I could not.* The door was locked. Our negro judge had locked me in with my companions in guilt. The two blacks seemed contented and callous; they first stuffed their mouths with tobacco, and then composed themselves to sleep. Preacher Jim curled himself up in a corner, and dropped to sleep in five minutes, as his heavy, long drawn breaths indicated.

One-eyed Sampson, not being so small and lithe, squatted on the floor, leaned his huge spikey head on the wall, his heavy lower lip

fell down, his eyes slowly closed, and then began a stertorous noise from his flat nose that was a rasping torture to my wrung nerves.

I had nothing to do but sit still through the long, tedious hours, hearing that hideous noise, and seeing those hideous faces of the sleeping blacks. They, as guilty as I, slept on as soundly, with as little sense of crime on their consciences, as any carnivorous beast of the jungles would sleep after having fed and gorged on the body of some helpless and luckless human. Sleep! For me all sleep seemed banished from the earth, and wretches such as I, doomed to sit with hot and burning eyes, denied one moment's sweet reprieve in sleep's forgetfulness.

It was dusk when Philip, our judge, unlocked the door, and bade us hurry along, the boat was coming. We went out—we three. Philip walked by our side, as if we were prisoners and he had us in charge. My trunk was already at the landing. The steamer stopped, and we were taken on board.

In this way I left Red Leaf.

My story is done. Long years have gone by since the occurrence of the events herein narrated. For me those years have brought no change for the better. *My* skies are still ashen, and the sun's light is not light for me; and all nature yet wears a sombre hue, and the pale faces of the dead I saw buried in the old sarcophagus, with the grey bones of a past age, still flit and float before my eyes. Materialists may scoff, and scientists sneer; but I know whereof I speak, and I know I am not crazy, and I know I see the faces of the beautiful dead, and their reproachful eyes gaze upon me, until the faces melt and fade into viewless air. And for a while nothing is seen, and they seem to be gone; but I know they are not gone. I know they are ever near me, for they come again and again, and gaze on me and fade away, only to come again and fade again.

I have told this thing to Captain Pym and to the two negroes. *They* laugh it to scorn; *they*

are troubled by no memories and no faces. *They* have grown sleek and fattened in prosperity, while I am wasted to a skeleton. *Their* nights are full of health-giving sleep; mine are tortured with thought. Their days are gay and pleasant; mine are dark and despairing. *My* hell began in the hour of my crime; theirs they do not even dream of. How is this? Is there no retribution for beings too callous to possess a consciousness of their own crimes?

Four persons were concerned in the cruel murder of the Master and the Lady of Red Leaf. Two were negroes, and two were whites. Three were men, and one was a woman.

Of these four, only one, the woman, has suffered, and yet suffers, the undying tortures of remorse. Only one, the woman, realises the blackness of the infamy done. Only one, the woman, passes sleepless nights and dreary days, without rest of mind or of body. Only one, the woman, is wasted and worn by the whips of conscience. And only one is haunted by the

wan faces of the beautiful dead, who gaze on her with their reproachful eyes, and form and fade into viewless air, and flit and float before her vision by night and by day.

Why this difference between persons equally evil? Is conscience a thing of sex? Do not the same moral ideas exist for men as for women? Is there a male and a female code of social and moral ethics?

Is it true, as the dying outcast said—"Women sin and suffer; men sin and prosper"?

She, that unhappy outcast, is now in her grave; *he*, the man who lured her to evil ways, the man who was a wolf in sheep's clothing, yet lives and fattens in a sleek and smooth prosperity. His flock yet follow his voice, and respect him as a teacher of God's word.

Perjurer, slanderer, adulterer as he is, he continues to bury the dead and unite the living, and baptises the unstained infants into the Church, and never seems to be troubled by the thought

of the young girl's soul that went to ruin through his treacherous teaching.

Captain Pym and the two negroes, my confrères in guilt, thus far have had unprecedented prosperity. Pym has risen in the world. He is rich, and rides in his carriage. He leans back on its green and gold silken cushions, and puffs his cigar, with a sleek satisfaction rarely seen. Pym holds high office in the State of Louisiana; he sits among the law-makers of the land, and is held in much esteem by the party in power.

The natives of the State, the owners of the soil, the white men disfranchised because of their "rebellion against the best government on earth," Pym looks down on, and jeers and taunts, and says in his heart—

"Ha! ha! *I* am set over you. *I* rule you; and the great UNION army is at my back, and gives me the lash over you, and with a crook of my finger I can bring down upon you the soldiers of the Union, to hold you in subjection."

Preacher Jim also stands high in the esteem of his party. Jim has ceased to be a preacher in the churches; he is now a politician at the polls. His colour and party have elected him a member of the Board of Education in the city of New Orleans; he is commonly put on the Committee on Text Books and Teachers, and manages to make his place and influence pay. Needy men and women, anxious for a situation in the schools, will pay roundly for his vote.

One-eyed Sampson is now a policeman in New Orleans, and walks his beat with a huge club in his hand and a pistol in his belt. He stands well with the Government and Government officials; his loyalty to the Republicans is undoubted. The Democrats secretly believe that this giant policeman has no more regard for the life of a Democrat than he has for the life of the huge cat-fish he catches from the river.

Why this great difference between *my* conscience and *theirs?* Have men no sense of guilt? Is it indeed true that "Women sin and suffer,

men sin and prosper"? Or is it that the woeful times are out of joint, made so by the woeful war, and that retribution for all wrongs will come in the future world?

THE END.

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